

**SAVE MY MARRIAGE TODAY!**



*Consults Book*  
VOLUME 2

A collection of marriage consultations written  
and compiled by Andrew Rusbatch

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## **Introduction**

Saving a marriage is seldom a simple task, as an accurate definition of marriage and what constitutes a problem is varied and complicated. While counselors and self help guides endeavor to provide couples with the answers they need to their most pressing marriage problems, there are a number of situations and influences that make some peoples' marriage crises unique.

This book is a compilation of consultations that have taken place between me and members of the Save My Marriage Today team, and couples in search of answers that they feel our course hasn't fully answered.

The purpose of this book is to facilitate your learning and understanding of the complexity, while at the same time universality, of marriage problems, and what it takes to create a truly secure and loving relationship.

I have edited any identifying details from the submissions and my replies, in order to protect the anonymity of my members. Other than that, I remind you that these are real consultations, from people with real marriage problems.

The consultations are broken down into several broad topics or themes, which will assist you in your navigation through this book and its contents. The book is divided into three volumes, in order that you might be able to read and digest the material, and print them if necessary, with more ease than a single 300+ page book.

As you read through the consultations, you may know someone with a similar marriage problem. Some of the consultations may strike parallels with your own marriage. In imparting our wisdom to members, our hope is to share this information with you, so that you may develop a greater appreciation and understanding of what is happening in your relationship and how to address it.

Yours in marriage success,

Andrew Rusbatch

Co-author  
Save My Marriage Today

## **Personal Problems**



My wife suffers from very low self-esteem. Because of this she takes our marital arguments very personally and says she does not know if she wants a relationship with me or when she will know. She expects me to wait indefinitely until she feels better about herself. This has been going on for about 3 years now. During those 3 years I have been to counseling and read books and have done a lot of work on myself to be a much better husband. Our relationship is OK, but not nearly as good as it could be and I really miss the affection, going out together and romance we used to have. My wife refuses to get outside help for her low self-esteem and figures it will get better over time. I'm having a lot of trouble waiting indefinitely, I don't know if or when she would be ready for more of a relationship with me. Any ideas?

### **MY REPLY:**

It sounds as though you have done a lot of work in finding a solution to your problem, and for this you are to be congratulated. The issue here is your wife, and you need to find a way to get through to her. The fact that she refuses to get help for her low self esteem is a huge problem, and one that if left, threatens to destroy her marriage. You need to impress on her how important it is that she seek some outside help for her self esteem issues, if not for her own benefit, for yours and your marriage. It will not get better over time.

The strength of a marriage is measured by the contributions that each partner makes. You have taken this problem very seriously, but your effort is not enough. She needs to take some responsibility for her problem. If you are having trouble waiting, you need to communicate this to her, and point out that her expectations on you are unreasonable. You can tell her you are prepared to help her, but she needs to first help herself.

3 years of waiting is not acceptable. Tell her you will not wait forever. She needs something to motivate her to seek help. This may be the threat of you leaving her. Set a time frame. Your wife's recovery needs to be measurable, and it needs to involve commitment from the both of you.

You need to set boundaries. You are willing to help, but you are not willing to put your life on hold for another 3 years. For your wife to have success in her problem she needs to be the one driving her recovery. You can't do it for her.

I hope some of these thoughts help.

I have talked to my wife and told her how deeply this issue affects me and that I don't want to wait indefinitely. She knew where I was headed with the conversation and felt threatened that I would leave her. I did not come right out and threaten her, but I also did not back down over how serious I was about not waiting forever. I feel I am walking a fine line between supporting her and making her feel

worse by being demanding. She still tells me that "she wants to take things one day at a time". My attempts to probe about her self-esteem issue get cut-off and she tells me she is not ready to talk about it. I cling to memories of how great a couple we were and I think about how great a future we could have. We also have 3 children and keeping the family together is important to both of us.

Do you have any specific advice on how to get through to her?

MY REPLY AGAIN:

Hi there,

If she is not prepared to talk to you about it, you need to insist that she talks to a counselor. You have been dealing with this for 3 years, which is far too long. You need to insist that she makes a commitment to her recovery, either by going with you or going alone to a counselor. Her wanting "to take things one day at a time" hasn't worked for the last 3 years, and you have no reason to believe it will in the next 3 years either.

I know you are battling with making her feel worse, but she also needs to consider how she is making this for you. She needs help, and if not from you, she needs to see a counselor. She needs to do this for you and your children. Tell her that if she is not prepared to do this for you, then she has a duty as a mother to do this for her children. They need to have two parents that are committed to them and to each other.

It is a very difficult situation for you to deal with, and you should not have to deal with it alone. I know you don't want to put pressure on her because it may result in the end of your marriage. But if she doesn't get help, your marriage will be over anyway. I wish you the best of luck.



Last Friday, I told the other man I love that I can't be friends with him since I want to be so much more in his life. And that we can't see or talk to each other anymore. It is too painful for me to watch him trying to see how he is with others. It will be very hard, and I feel sick to and hopeless. He called me again today to say that he is concerned about me and I told him please do not call me. I know I need to break away from him regardless if my marriage will survive or not. But how do I do it?

You said in your book, what is the alternative? I am not sure. I asked for divorce but my husband wants now to give the marriage a last chance, until now I stay in my marriage for the kids, not knowing that I can feel happy and completely fulfilled with someone. Now I want more I want to be happy, loved and wanted. I know that having affair was wrong (but thought me believing in my self that I am normal and that I can feel loved and that this feeling can make you feel like you can do everything, that arguing is good and shows that those two people cares for each other, that you can grow closer by talking about your feeling good or bad- I never had this with my husband) and God only knows how much it was painful to pretend at home so no one gets hurt in my family. My husband was very happy that I did not need anything more from him and he never showed that he wanted me. In your book you saying that I should confess the affair, my therapist said that I should never told him about that, that this will hurt him more and will not help us. My marriage problems started before my affair, and I beg my husband

to seek help, I was the one loving, giving and always wanting him( I have a high sexual drive), he on the other hand is very cold and he kept saying he loves me but never made me feel loved. He also develops about 8 years ago pre ejaculation problem and when I asked to get help he told me 40% of men are like that. He avoided any sexual contact with me. With time I closed up, since the pain of being rejected sexually and often being the last priority on his list was too painful (he is a good father; he loves sports and is coach for both of my sons in soccer and basketball),but I become a sports widow. We do not argue, we never did, we never felt jealous of each other, and we never talked about emotions in our marriage. We were always polite and well behaved, all of our friends thought we are the perfect couples but I felt lonely. From what I have found out now even when he did not like something he never told me, therefore I realize I never knew what he really likes or not. He just stayed quiet until I did not mention that anymore. With time I just stop asking to be loved or to have any intimate contact, before I was the one always asking for it and been rejected often. You asked me what the other man gives to me that my husband did not, he put me first, always care what I did and where I went, I always saw attraction in his eyes, he always dropped everything when I needed him. Of course I did the same for him. He went to pick up my kids if I had to work late since my husband was too busy at work; he dropped his work and when to get them. When I lost my job he was the one working with me on my resume and making me sent he and follow up until I got job that I would not apply on my own before. I always make me believe that I am worth it. My husband never made me feel like that. How I can work to have this now with him when he never could do it before, we will be going to a marriage therapy, but I feel like I am fooling my self. He knows for very long time I am unhappy but what I need from him is not natural for him. It feels fake and forced and I can feel that. Will the pain go away, the emptiness and loneliness?

How do I let go of all the regrets and be able to give him and me a chance? Thanks.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Thanks for your email. I can see the concerns you have in trying to save your marriage, as you are scared that nothing is going to change. What you need to have faith in is your ability to give your marriage a chance, and do your utmost to stay together for your children's sake.

You need to build communication between you and your husband. If you want to know what he really likes, ask him. You only get out of your marriage what you are prepared to put in. If you are unhappy with the communication in your marriage you need to make a greater effort to increase it and make it better. You and your husband are the only ones who can do this. You each have a role to play. You can also tell him what you need in a husband, and how you need to feel attractive and important. Communicate to your husband your needs so you can make sure he knows. It is time for you to take responsibility for your role in your marriage. Communication involves two people, and while your husband has his faults, you also have areas you need to work on.

The same goes for your counseling. It will only work for you if you are prepared to make the effort. A counselor only facilitates or guides the process, but the work has to be done by you and your husband. You have communication issues to address, but you also need to look at intimacy issues and how this is affecting your relationship. Intimacy is a founding aspect of a relationship. If your husband is

experiencing dysfunction or sexual issues, you need to explore other options either with your counselor or a sexual therapist. Pre-ejaculation is a common problem among men, but it doesn't have to spell the end of your sex life. He has a very low sex-drive, and yours is very high. Its up to the two of you to find a compromise or some common ground. I wonder, however, if a lot of your marital problem stemmed from this lack of intimacy and contact.

You tell me he is a good father, and I am really pleased to hear that. But you need to work on making him a better husband. It all starts with communication, and the two of you finding a place and a level of communication you both feel comfortable with. If you want a better husband, tell him how. It may feel unnatural to him initially, but you have to be patient.

Good luck,

Kind regards,

Andrew



Hello,

I am a 42 y.o. doctor. My wife of 11 years is just about to turn 40. We married after 2 short weeks, 3 times (civil marriage, and religious marriage twice, all the same year). Her family was not supportive. My wife is loving and wonderful, but she is scarred by a childhood of neglect and abuse. I have a daughter from a prior relationship. My wife has been loving and accepting of her, for all this time.

Also, my wife is prone to severe depression, anger issues, and negative thinking. I have been a bit neglectful of her at times. Violence and infidelity were NEVER an issue. At the end of April my wife demanded that I leave the house for a separation. We have 2 children together, age 8 and 5.

I could not leave. We were a close and loving couple until 2 days prior. At that time my wife got flooded and rattled off at me a litany of ways that I wronged her over the years, issues that I thought resolved: I wasn't engaging enough with the kids, not caring enough with her, I was controlling, angry, etc (she says). I have engaged in psychotherapy, but she deemed it "too little too late". Anyway, she took my refusal to leave as the ultimate proof that I did not care for her. 3 days later she went to a lawyer, filed for divorce, and slapped a restraining order on me on fears, that she admits, were not exactly clear and dangerous, but she "needed me out of the house immediately".

A 1 month court fight followed. Now the dust is settling a bit. We have the children with me 30% of the time. She lives in our house. She quickly complains about how I wronged in court papers, that she is unwilling to admit that she did the same to me, because she "needed" to do it. She insists that I was controlling and manipulative, although my psychiatrist isn't impressed.



Bottom line: I love my wife. I want to reconcile with her. We have 2 children together, and we had what I believe was a wonderful marriage. While we are at more civilized terms now, I haven't been begging nor pleading, nor arguing. We even had a marital counseling session together. It was a bit hostile, but it is communication. I am trying to give her as much space as possible. I am willing to be very forgiving.

Oh, also, my wife was being medicated for depression. She also may have issues with ADD and borderline personality disorder. She tends to be quite self centered. Regardless, I really love her. I think that we are soul mates. We are now living separately, but at least we have been able to talk over the phone a bit. She is a very emotional person. I can't believe all the pain that she spread to our children and our family and friends. It doesn't seem to bother her much. I hope that you can help this very difficult situation. Please do ask questions if you need to.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission. I can see a few things in your email that concerned me, the first being how quickly you married. Two short weeks is a very short length of time, and it is fair to say that you jumped right in the deep end in the hope that your lust for one another would be enough to get you through. In some respect it has, but I can understand that it must have come at a cost to you, particularly in the support of her family in your decision to get married. When you mention that you were in a loving and close relationship until 2 days prior, I immediately can see a problem. I still don't understand how 2 days can bring a couple from close and loving to demands that you leave the house and that you separate.

Telling you how you wronged her over the years is masking a deeper problem, and perhaps one in which your wife is struggling with her place in your relationship and her emotions due to her medication. It is hard to establish whether her concerns about you not engaging enough with the kids and being angry and controlling are valid arguments, or whether she is simply throwing these accusations at you in the midst of her anger. If they are valid points for improvement, listing them in the height of anger is a very dysfunctional way of expressing them.

The biggest issue here is a complete lack of effective communication, in which the both of you are able to sit down and discuss your feelings as adults. You both have a responsibility to each other as well as your children to be able to discuss feelings without judgment or accusation. I am a firm believer that nobody forces you to feel the way you do, and that a certain part of feeling a particular feeling is conscious choice. What I mean by this is that you may say something that hurts your wife's feelings, but the reaction she has, whether it is defensiveness, sorrow, or anger, is controlled on a large part by her.

Your wife cannot blame her unhappiness on you. The responsibility lies with both of you, and her state of unhappiness is due to her inability to communicate her feelings more effectively. How long has she been on depression medication, and do you feel that this contributed to her outburst?

I need to know more detail about the circumstances during the two days that led up to the outburst and the marital breakdown to understand better where things went wrong.

The key in the meantime is to focus on building better communication and each of you talking about your feelings without accusing one another. A good way to do this is use sentences that start with "I feel..." rather than "You make..."

I look forward to hearing from you.



HIS REPLY:

Hi, there,

you are right. My wife and I have a different way of remembering things: while I tend to focus on the positive, almost to a foolish fault, she has a tremendous ability to focus on every negative experience, has built a lot of resentment, and has shown difficulty forgiving, and letting go. My assumption was that several slights (getting her the wrong gift, not being able to anticipate her wishes), were already dealt with, while in truth they were slumbering, waiting for the next wrong to come up, to then all bubble up together..

I really thought i had a good, close marriage, while my wife was carefully storing up a bunch of resentment each time, that really distorted our life.

For example, back in February we went on a 1 week vacation to Tucson, that she agreed was akin to a second honeymoon. Yet, the last week of April I was unable to perform to her expectations: I am a doctor, with two sick colleagues in my practice back then, whose patient load needed coverage. It got me physically tired, yet I was not allowed any "slack" at home. So I underperformed, and I got served divorce papers, including a restraining order that she admits wasn't exactly based on fact, but rather on her need to have me gone from the house. She is still very angry.

On the 25th of April she disclosed to me that she needed "space" from me, and to facilitate this by endorsing her wish to spend the night at some neighbors of ours. Then on the 26th she demanded a separation: that i leave the house. Through a marriage counselor we agreed that she would have stayed at home, in a different bedroom.

Yet, when I woke her up because our 5 y.o. son was asking for her while suffering a night terror, I gave her a guilt push by demanding that she make an effort to sleep in the marital bed to give him relief. The following day I sent her a loving short message on her cell phone. She became irate, took the kids and left. 3 days later I got served with divorce/restraining papers. Violence or infidelity have never been an issue. She left tons of friends and family in her wake devastated by her decision.

Also I immediately gave in to her request, back in the end of April, to seek psychotherapy for my own "issues", at least to appease her, as well as for my own self growth. Yet it was "too little-too late" for her. I should have done it earlier..... Sometimes you just can't win. In her family, she was abused and neglected, and was a troubled, wounded youngster who got herself into lots of trouble.

Last year she also experienced distance form me, although not as much, but then we got closer for the rest of the winter. She seemed happy, in the sadness of her depression. The relationship, granted, may not be entirely to blame.

She had been on medicine for 4 years. Varying amounts of it. She also has a tendency to self mutilation. She attempted suicide twice in her life. In 2004 she became upset at the kids, drank a bottle of vodka, cut her wrist and threatened a pill overdose (while alone with them). Thankfully a neighbor and I helped her. It took her 4 days to recover.

Last year she was threatening to cut herself because I got her the wrong book for mother's day. Granted, it was a poor choice (the idiot's guide to getting your life organized), and I regretted it. i thought that it was forgiven. Not so. It is still coming up.

We are trying ( I am trying) to build better communication, but she is still furious. She still hurls epithets at me. She has had some good days recently, but claims that our relationship is over, and it'll NEVER get better (curious how she can see the future). She is impulsive: that's why we got married so quickly. This is why, in my mind, this divorce is coming about so quickly. I have been validating her feelings, since reasoning isn't helping. I feel that she needs to do what she needs to do. I mourn this marriage, that was good. All I can do is try to act lovingly, and hope for the better. Maybe we'll re-unite. Who knows? Maybe not.

It is all so sad. I thought that your response was excellent. Thank you so much.  
I am looking forward to receiving more.

MY REPLY:

I'm going to start by telling you something. You have done nothing wrong.  
Why do I say that? Because all too often people have unrealistic expectations in marriage and expect their partners to be perfection personified. That simply can't happen. People are created to live and learn in life's journey and part of growing in relationships is to get it right sometimes, and to sometimes get it wrong. The important thing about getting things wrong and continuing to grow within your marriage is to learn something from mistakes, and to learn something from your reaction to this mistake. I really think this is a lesson that you and your wife can both take from this.

I find your wife's reactions to being "wronged" very unhealthy. She has very high expectations of what she expects from a husband and father to her children, yet the same high standards do not seem to apply to her. I point to the restraining order with a creative stretch of truth, serving only her need to have you out of the house and punished to serve her own selfish need for revenge. Attempting suicide in front of your children would be another example where she has failed in meeting her own high standards, yet she seems to be happy to overlook this.

I believe you need to sit down with a mediator or counselor and examine what each of your expectations of marriage are, and how you are able to each live to the standards that you set for yourselves and for each other.

What do you expect from a wife?  
What does she expect from a husband?  
Are these expectations reasonable?  
Are these expectations healthy?

The next step is to examine reactions when these expectations are not met. Your wife has an anger management problem, and needs to spend some time looking at her reactions and why they are so explosive. What triggers these explosive outbursts, and why? Why does she feel the need to be so violent? What is she reacting to? What part of her feels so threatened by your actions?

These are areas I want you to look at, and hopefully developing greater communication will come as a result of identifying and examining expectations. I have some affirmations I want you and your wife to consider:

There is no such thing as perfection.  
Imperfection is truth  
It is okay to make mistakes.  
Mistakes provide opportunity for understanding.  
It is okay to forgive.  
Forgiveness is motivated by love.  
Learning and loving is part of your journey.

Kind regards,  
Andrew

HIS REPLY:

Thank you, Andrew. Your response is powerful.  
It is a chore to get my wife to go to counseling. She is resisting it. I'll try to go at least by myself, hopefully she'll follow. We had gone to counseling for 3 years in the past. The psychiatrist who was seeing us quickly started my wife on medication. Yet, he was not versed in couples' therapy, and eventually lost his license for buying narcotics from a patient of his. I contend that we never really had an honest chance at success, although I still experienced growth through that phase.

My wife's line is that "we tried counseling, and it didn't work, I am done now".  
I'll try inviting her to anger management classes with me, although she thinks it is only my problem. I might learn something from that too. It has been very frustrating dealing with her projections ( I am angry, sad, depressed, pathetic, lonely, needing therapy, etc.) since she basically has no insight. Also, she seems inclined to splitting things into "black and white". What's worse, she often accuses me of doing things that I actually never did (very strange), and she does so forcefully. I think that those are called "cognitive distortions". They aren't true, yet you can see that she clearly believes those "modified memories".

I am thinking that she may be more than I could handle in a healthy way, yet, when we exchanged vows, I did believe that they were life long, and that, once children are in the picture, giving up is only the truly last option. I feel that we did not get there yet, but I am the only one in the couple believing so.

Thanks again for your feedback: it is truly invaluable. Your response is most welcome.



I purchased and read your e-book Save My Marriage and the one for those in extreme crisis. It's was extremely helpful to me in realizing what had caused my marriage to deteriorate. We've been together ten years. My husband has been very unhappy for the last few years. We moved to another state and started new jobs. He didn't like his job and missed friends and family. We bought a house and I focused on finishing it up and working long hours to pay for it. My husband began binge drinking and got several D.U.I.s. He was forced into a court ordered alcohol/drug treatment program. A few months into the program, he left our home saying he couldn't deal with us anymore.



He said he didn't have it in him and didn't see that things would ever change. I was completely knocked off balance. In my mind I had done nothing wrong-he had caused all the emotional and financial stress. I realize after reading your books that I should have handled the conflict in a less destructive/healthy way. He needed my support and instead in anger I threatened to kick him out, divorce him, etc. All the problems pushed me deeper into depression and I shut down to him. I lost my respect for him. It was the most I could do to keep it all together and go to work everyday and pretend my life was great. Since he left me I've been getting myself together-going to therapy, working out, reconnecting with friends(I shut them out too),and reading self help books and saving your marriage books. I'm thinking clearly now and have found some perspective. I have apologized to my husband and taken responsibility for my actions and the lack of support during his problem. I love my husband very much and I would like to forgive, forget, and put it in our past right now. Starting over I'd like to implement what I've learned and have a better marriage than ever. Our problems over the past few years shouldn't be a death sentence. He been living with his mother for over two months. He started a new job. He talks to me occasionally but he is reluctant to get back together "right now" He says that he is overwhelmed with his new job, all the program meetings, etc.

He mostly says "he doesn't have it in him" He said that we would have to start a new relationship and his AA counselor says that would be much stress(he could relapse) and he shouldn't start a new relationship in the first year of recovery. I want my husband to come home and we move forward. I have forgiven him and I have faith in us. He doesn't right now. What do I do? Wait around for a year and then see if he's willing to reconcile? I feel so helpless that HE is determining the fate of our relationship. Does he just need more time to sort things out? I worry that he is just in avoidance and we need to get back together and begin to heal and restore our marriage.  
Help!!!!!!!!!!

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission.

While this time may seem like you are waiting endlessly for your husband and you feel so helpless, there is plenty you can be doing while you are on your own. I am happy to hear you writing that you have used this time to find some perspective and reconnect with other parts of your life such as old friends as well as reading books and gaining understanding of where you are in your life.

While you are ready to forgive and forget, your husband sounds as though he is still a long way off. In fact, his understanding of where he is as a person is hampered by his alcoholism as well as his inability to deal with pressure.

You need to focus on maintaining contact with your husband and gradually increasing the frequency of your contact. I would encourage you to do this slowly, a little extra each week, so that you are able to rebuild your friendship and so that he feels comfortable in your presence and in confiding feelings in you.

This may take a while, but if you want to maximize your chances of saving your marriage, you are going to need to accept that your solution is not a short-term one. This problem is not going to go away in the next few weeks or even months. This is about rebuilding your friendship with your husband, and is a lifetime commitment.

While looking at self-help books, take a look at books covering alcoholism and depression so that you can better understand what your husband is going through. He needs your support, not pressure, and the best way you can offer this is through your understanding and time.



I have really enjoyed reading your articles and working through your course. It inspired me and gave me the understanding I needed about women. I was waiting for my wife to come home so we could read the articles and books together and work on our marriage. When she did come home after spending a month away attending to her father funeral, she fell in love with an old friend of ours. He was there when she was in pain and showered her with love. You know what happens.

Why is life so hard, just when you think things will be ok, it is too late.

You can't change her mind when she is in love.

The only hope I have is that he is 12hrs flight away.  
And because she has a lot to consider her two sons 18 and 21

That's all for now

If you have the time it would be appreciated if you could respond to my letter.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Being away from your wife in her time of greatest need can sometimes mean you will not be able to be there to support and cherish her, and it's not unusual for one of you to reach out to others for support and solace. The death of a parent is a defining time in some people's lives, as they realize that the security and familiarity of childhood has passed, and they are hauntingly reminded of their own mortality and place in the world. It is the end of an era, and the bond that your wife has shared with her father over the last 40-50 years is now at an end.

In recognizing grief, it's important to realize that each of us have a different way of reacting and processing it into our consciousness. For some, it's a time of wanting to be alone to process thoughts and emotions. For others it's a craving for kinship and belonging.

I don't believe that the feelings she has for this friend is love. A daughter in grief reached out for support at a traumatic moment in her life, and he fulfilled a need. He may have been an understanding ear, a shoulder to cry on, a masculine form of protection and support in a moment of vulnerability.

That time has passed now. The tears stopped, the hollowness of loss subsided, and the reality of grief set in and moved on. She may have believed for a moment that it was love, but I can tell you it wasn't. When that moment ended, she returned home to you and your children, perhaps ready again to be a mother and wife.

When she tells you it was love, have you taken the time to consider what love actually is? Love is what made her come home to you and your children. Love isn't a fleeting feeling in a vulnerable moment.

If you want to maximize your chances of saving your marriage, you need to focus on being her friend, husband, and lover. She may need all three. Be there for your wife. Hold her, hug her, kiss her. Be the one she can turn to when she is feeling weak and in need of strength.

Make time to be alone with her. Encourage her to talk to you about her fears, her dreams, and find new ways to connect with one another. Set aside one evening a week and one day on a weekend for couple time where you can simply sit and be with one another. You might want to listen to an album, share a bottle of wine, or have a meal together. The important thing is that you are making time to be friends with one another, and rediscovering what it takes to communicate.

Remind her of the power of her femininity. Tell her the things about her that you love, like the smell of her hair, the softness of her skin, the scent that she leaves in a room when she leaves it, and the way her face lights up when she smiles. It may have been a long time that she last heard praise or words of love from you. It's never too late.

I have lots of material with supporting exercises in my course that would be of enormous help to you and your wife, and every faith that once you read and apply some of the concepts, overcoming this obstacle will seem much more possible.



My husband and I have been separated since August 1, last year. I have read all of your Save My Marriage Ebooks. My husband is still negative about our marriage. I don't know what to do. I have taken responsibility for all that I done wrong in our marriage. It seems as though his issue is about something that happened in his childhood between his mother and father. I can't change that. I can only work on me. He had negative baggage when we married. How can we get past something that really has nothing to do with us? Pretty confusing huh?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Dealing with the hurt associated with past relationships is a considerable stumbling block for many people, and childhood wounds are the hardest to heal. The issues that you had in your marriage problem may have touched on a part of his past that he hasn't really dealt with, and may have brought forward a lot of repressed feelings about his relationship with his father and mother.

You are right when you mention that you can't change that, and this is a very powerful realization. Many people try so hard to bury the feelings of the past and take responsibility for feelings that they didn't create, and the feelings of exasperation and frustration at not knowing how to fix this can drive many couples apart. The first step in this process is to realize that your marriage problem may have reintroduced some old feelings, but they were in no way the cause of the feelings or the problems that followed.



You did, however, know a lot of negative baggage was present when you married, and in not dealing with the baggage at that time, it reinforced the idea that it is okay to bury feelings that complicate or confuse his perception of his past and hope that they would go away in time. Feelings and past experiences are things that always offer us the opportunity to learn, either something about ourselves or those around us. Sometimes the negative events of our past bring forth a strength that we may have not otherwise known existed.

Without knowing what your specific marital issues are, or the issues he has with his parents, the advice I can offer here is limited. If you feel the past issues with his parents are holding your husband back, you need to encourage him to seek professional counseling. This is not a process you will be able to facilitate on your own.

You cannot control your husband's feelings, but you can control your reaction to them. At a time like this, you need to be supportive and loving, even if he is unable to reciprocate at the moment. Your support and love may be the one thing in his life that seems certain, and despite his negativity, may offer you hope to get him to counseling so he can explore his past and begin healing.

Keep up the good work. I list a number of ways you can demonstrate your love and support for your husband in Book 2, in particular Chapter 7: Love is a Doing Word. Remember, real love is the gifting of love without the need for affirmation or reciprocation. You may not be able to offer him a high level of love, but you can support him and be his friend through this. This is the first step on the path to recovery.



Any help you can give me to save my marriage would be greatly appreciated - please!  
Not really sure where to start but there are a number of factors that effect our relationship and I think the history is important in the whole scheme of things and as we've only been together a total of four years I hope it won't take too long - or bore you silly.

My husband is 39 and I am 36, we have two children aged 3 and 18months, as well as a 'step' daughter (I'll explain later about that relationship). This is my second marriage but my husband's first, although he has had a couple of long term relationships.

I was divorced for two and a bit years when I met my now husband on a night out locally, he was funny, tall, handsome and different - and I liked him. I gave him my number and he phoned a couple of days later and we met up. He told me then that he was living with someone and she had a child although not his child, I said I wouldn't start anything until he was free to but he had my number and could call me. He sent me an email at work and his ex found it and within a week of us meeting she had asked him to leave - so not an ideal start. He found some rented accommodation and we started to see each other, admittedly it was probably too soon but we had fun together and although he had strong ties to his ex's daughter it was a pretty clean break although I have since found out he struggled hard with it.

He has suffered depression for a long time and has tried to get help, he is on medication and has tried many forms of counseling. I have tried to support him and find out as much as I can to help him, even to the point of buying him a light therapy box to see if that would help alleviate some of the symptoms. But I know realize perhaps this help may have seemed to him to have been too pushy? I have even tried to help get him further treatment as I will explain later.

When we met I was a successful, independent woman, with a brand new car, my own house and could do what I want when I wanted. I've never been a major going out type person and equally enjoy a night in watching the television with a cup of tea - but I didn't dislike my life on my own. I traveled quite a bit with work and had a good job of Customer Services Director. He on the other hand had no assets apart from his own franchise business selling tools. So whilst I did know it was an unequal partnership I took on most of the responsibility of paying for things because I felt I should.

He moved into my house within three months and arranged a lovely holiday for us which was just amazing. Three months after that he said he wasn't happy and moved out for a while, although left all his belongings at mine so I did see him regularly and we were able to talk things through and eventually got back together. I had a holiday booked with a girlfriend and when I got back we decided to make a go of it, I fell pregnant almost immediately. I went to a conference with work in the US and he came too as a short holiday, whilst there he arranged an amazing balloon ride over the Utah Mountains and proposed. So in our first year we'd achieved quite a lot! We see his 'step daughter' for want of a better phrase every other weekend and due to the imminent new arrival we started to look into moving or the possibility of extending the house. We opted for the latter and I borrowed against my mortgage to finance it. However, with the prospect of a new baby and all the stuff we needed (or I felt we needed!!), buying stuff for the extension, arranging a wedding, and many other things I got us into a lot of debt, which I kept from him. Despite that, after the birth of our first child I returned to my job but working only 4 days a week instead of full time, and whilst I talked about it I didn't really sit down with him and talk it through with him and understand how he would feel about it. But neither did he challenge this even though he knew of the plan.

We had a fantastic wedding in a Scottish castle with just a few family and friends but it had probably cost three or four times the amount of my first wedding. It was my husband's first wedding and I felt he deserved to have the big wedding and he seemed to want it to. Again, I did a lot of the organizing as my job allowed me the flexibility to do this. We drove up to Scotland a couple of days before so that we could get ready and enjoyed some time alone. When our guests arrived we had a big party on the night before the wedding. There was a lot of alcohol consumed by everyone and my husband did two silly things in my eyes, a) whilst drunk, he drove our car to the back of the house where he and some friends were sat so that they could listen to some music, I was very annoyed about this in case of what could have happened, b) later that night he and his friends all stripped naked and played like kids on the front lawn of the castle. Both of these incidents I felt were totally disrespectful of where we were and not appropriate for the event. His stance was that he could do what he liked and if I didn't like it I shouldn't marry him. We tried to talk the following day but the wedding was looming and we had too much to do, it was a pressure cooker of emotions. But we did get married and had a lovely day.

I then fell pregnant with our second child, whilst my first pregnancy was easy and uneventful; I suffered quite a bit with the second and was totally exhausted having still got a small baby under a year old. I began to feel that I wasn't being helped out as much and that the running of the home and everything else was all down to me. My husband persuaded me to have a short break away during the pregnancy

but it wasn't an easy one, we took both his 'step' daughter and our toddler. Once he'd made the initial decision the rest was left down to me, my passport was still in my maiden name, my daughter didn't even have one, the dog needed to be looked after in kennels, plus all the sorting out and packing and it all fell to me to sort. So I was stressed to the hilt by the time we got there.

We decided that we would take my husbands mobile phone due to the fact I was pregnant and my mum was worried about me, so I could text or ring just to put her mind at rest, however I picked up his phone one day thinking a message had come from my mum and found a text from a girl. I confronted him with it and he said she was a friend, I was so upset and it really knocked me off balance especially with my hormones all over the place as they were.

After the break we weren't right but he promised he wouldn't text women again and we made the best of it as we waited for the birth of our second child. One morning I felt the compelling urge to check his phone for messages and found that the night before he had sent two messages to two different women (one being his ex) saying 'Goodnight sexy!', I was gutted again. Again I confronted him and whilst I was ashamed to have looked on his phone I felt vindicated in that I had found what I was looking for. When I confronted him again he felt I'd broken his trust by checking his phone, I couldn't disagree with that but I'd seen them for myself - after that he started to lock his phone which made me even more suspicious. He has always had a night out with his friends in the week but I become very guarded on these occasions from then on and I suppose I did not handle myself very well.

I was very ill just before the birth and had to leave work earlier than anticipated. I continued to feel as though I had to do everything because I was at home, despite being 8 months pregnant with an 18 month toddler so I probably did take a lot of stuff out on him. The day my son was born I found an invoice to him for a break away with his friends which I knew nothing about. So I do not look back on my sons birth with fond memories as I was very very hurt.

After my son was born, my husband declared that I had been absolutely horrible to him during my pregnancy and that he would need time to get over it. In all this took about three months. Shortly after the birth I was diagnosed with post natal depression and I was very ill. I was fast tracked through the medical services available as they felt it sufficiently bad enough to move me to the top of the list. I received medication and counseling, all of which were very good, but absolutely no support from my husband as he was still taking time to get over how he felt he'd been treated by me - which to me felt like sulking. I was crying out for him to help me but he refused.

As I was now aware of what medical treatment could be available for depression and the many forms of counseling etc that could be offered I tried to get him further help with his depression, but I can only take this so far. I have felt on many times he doesn't want to get better as he likes the fact he can use this as an excuse to withdraw, and continue to refrain from sex. I do know he genuinely suffers but doesn't seem to want to fight to get better. And as a short term fix for himself he does drink and he does do recreational drugs, both of which I feel prove he doesn't want to get better. He does not accept my view.

Since our sons birth we have continued to have ups and downs and he has been caught texting his ex again and not in a friendly way but that could easily be misconstrued as more! He was caught because he sent the text to a friend of mine instead of to his ex and due to our history she felt I needed to see it. He had tried to convince her not to and that it would be her fault if our marriage failed, but she told



me anyway. I still feel like I continue to do everything at home as well as work 4 days a week and do most if not all of the chores. The grass went uncut for three months this summer which meant it was difficult to play with our kids outside and I ended up having to take them out all the time instead of just being able to enjoy them in our own garden. The most recent run in we have had was over a weekends drinking for him, on a weekend when we had his step daughter he went to the pub to watch football and was gone about 3 hours, the following day he went out again and decided to roll in 8 hours later and wondered why I was upset. Following the row that ensued I asked him to go and stay at his mums house as I felt very threatened and just needed some space, he stayed there for a week whilst they were on holiday. I regretted it but do think I made the right choice. This was 6 weeks ago and up until this week he refused to talk about it or choose what he wants to do. I have booked a session with marriage guidance which he attended with me but did not participate fully or meaningfully, he says he feels I want to change him but can't tell me into what - and I really don't I would just like some help and respect and for us to be a team especially in the early years of our children's lives. He is a good dad although he feels I think differently just because I think he could do more with them, he rarely spends any one on one time with them just playing. He has said some really hurtful things as have I but he will only ever focus on how I make him feel. He has now said he will have to do what is best for him and he will let me know his decision soon. And so I continue to wait.....

I was up all last night reading all the material from the course, and I did glean some very useful information and techniques all of which I wish I'd had many months ago. I would like to save my marriage as I do love my husband but at the moment I do not think he feels or wants the same - but how am I to know? It maybe that he truly doesn't know but does not see that this situation is hard for me to accept as it stands not knowing what's going to happen especially with two small children to care about as well.

Where do I start?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email and the obvious effort that has gone into explaining your marital situation and putting the issues in context. The reason I ask customers to tell me about what their problems are, is that the exercise of thinking about your marital issues can often be a very challenging and telling experience. What it does is affords you the ability to establish what the issues are, prioritize them, and help me in identifying recurring themes and patterns that may have developed over the course of your marriage.

So I feel this benefits both you and me, as you are able to think clearly what the issues are, and it helps me offer insights to assist you in overcoming the themes and issues around your marriage crisis.

Looking at your email, there are a lot of different issues here, and from the look of it you have been plagued with issues that have remained unresolved since your relationship started.

The first issue I identified is your husband's depression. You mention that he is on medication and has tried many forms of counseling. Without undertaking effective counseling and making a commitment to get better, things aren't going to get much better. Medication is not designed to get rid of your problems as much as it is to help you live in ignorance of them. I refer to medication as the first step up the ladder, which for many is necessary, but the path to real recovery is in taking the other steps yourself

and facing your fears and your problems in an adult fashion. Medication is a temporary fix. Attending counseling and gaining insights with the help of a counselor is what is going to help your husband deal with the cause of his depression and help him find ways to manage it and recover.

The second issue I identified is the power struggle that is inherent in your relationship. You were a successful woman with a brand new car and a home, while he had no assets other than a franchise business. What this did was create an inequality over how the money would be spent, and is something that you need to look at. Once you enter into a relationship and make a commitment to each other, you need to adjust to living as a couple rather than examining each person's material contributions to the relationship. While this is something easier said than done, it is a damaging mindset to have and something that you can work on. I also have a chapter in the book that looks at the power of money in relationships.

The same principle applies when you got yourselves into debt extending the house, which you kept from him. Money is one of the most prolific contributors to marriage problems, and is something that should have been shared and discussed at the time it happened. Another observation I made at this point is that despite the fact that the two of you were in a relationship at that stage, you were behaving as individuals, managing money as single people and communicating as individuals. The transition from single to being part of a couple is a difficult one, and one that both of you need to make a greater effort to be part of. There is a difference between being part of a couple and truly living as a couple. When you are a real couple there is no such thing as my assets and your assets. They are "ours".

This idea was further discussed when you mentioned your husband's antics before the wedding and his reply to your concerns. His stance that he could do what he liked and if you didn't like it you shouldn't marry him is one that should tell you very clearly where he is at. He may be your husband and father to your children, but he is emotionally unavailable and unable or unwilling to live as part of a team. This is further evidence of the selfish individual mentality that he seems to have adopted.

I am not advocating that marriage has to involve substantial changes in a person, but it does involves some changes. There is an element of truth to his statement that he can do as he likes, but being part of a couple means he needs to take more than his own feelings into account. He needs to learn to start thinking about both of you, not just himself. This might also help him make a greater contribution to the running of your home instead of leaving it all to you.

To deal with this issue, I want you to both sit down and list all of the tasks that both of you do to keep the home running, including housework, cleaning, maintenance, outdoor chores, childcare and the care of pets. How much time per week does each task take? Who does the work? Do either of you believe it is split fairly? What tasks do you feel he could do more of?

In sitting down and listing contributions to the marriage, it would be beneficial for both of you to identify what needs to be done for the household to function. List all the things you do to care for your children as well. Marriage is about teamwork and each member of the team making an equal contribution. This is an opportunity for both of you to sit down and discuss the division of chores and tasks and how you can better work as a team. The benefit of doing this is that you will both be able to identify your contributions to the relationship and enable you both to work more efficiently. The benefit of being more efficient as a couple is that there is more time to spend together doing the things you love.

You are stressed because you are not coping. Rather than your husband choosing to be insulted by this and taking time out, he would be better to understand the causes of your stress and react to that. This is not about your husband needing to change. This is about him needing to grow up and evolve into a husband rather than continuing to live as an individual. Your husband is emotionally unavailable and needs to decide at this stage if he is willing to participate in the marriage. Counseling is the best way for you both to find ways for your husband to participate in the marriage while maintaining some of the freedoms he enjoyed as a single man.

The texting is a separate issue entirely, and one that you are going to need to set very clear boundaries on. This is an issue of breach of trust. You have caught him a couple of times now and he has promised that the behavior would stop. You have not broken his trust. He has broken yours. He promised it would stop and it hasn't. I would challenge him to explain how his behavior and promises are supposed to reassure you that he is committed to this relationship when he has proven that he will not honor his promises.

There are so many issues in your marriage crisis it is hard to know where to start, but the biggest of all of these is your husband's emotional unavailability and unwillingness to live as a couple rather than as individuals. The aim of your counseling will be to find ways to invite your husband into being part of the relationship and to rethink his selfish behaviors. This is going to determine if your marriage can be saved or not.



My husband sneaks and lies and hides money to gamble. He left then came back because I hurt myself. He is cold, uncaring, does not see the way he really is. Forgets what he says, insist its all me. Blames me for everything that happens. Has told everyone what I did and that is the only reason he's here. Has even gotten our adult children to lie and hide money from me. Rationalizes everything he does. Tells me he's lost, empty, miserable. Doesn't care if he dies tomorrow. Absolutely refuses to get help. Everyone thinks I am just holding on. They don't see the terrible trouble he is in. Has become so verbally abusive. How do I reach him. He recently won 10,000.00. I never knew, everyone hid it because we were separated then. Has gambled every penny away. Help me?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

From what you have written, you are with a man who doesn't know how to love you, and doesn't respect you either. At the same time, however, if he has a gambling addiction and you are challenging this behavior, he is going to fight you in a way that you may not be used to. What I mean is that he is going to rationalize his gambling, and make his addiction sound as normal as possible. It is easier to attack or blame you for his problems rather than face up to them himself.

He is telling you he is lost, empty, and miserable. Why do you think he feels like this? Has there been a significant event in his life that has led him to feel this way? Do you think he may be using the euphoric



rush of gambling to replace this empty feeling in his life? If this is true, can you see why he is fighting you on this issue? The key here is not to take it personally. If he is deep in the clutches of an addiction, he is fighting you challenging him, not you personally.

Until your husband is able to recognize that he has an addiction, there is little chance of getting the help he needs. The people around him are supporting his behavior by supporting his gambling and getting your children to lie and hide money from you. Until more people around him are able to recognize his addiction, you are going to need to back off.

Sometimes the lessons we learn come from other people, and sometimes the best lessons learnt are from the mistakes we make ourselves. It seems that your husband is destined to go down this path, and until he is able to recognize the destructive patterns of behavior he has developed, you need to keep your distance. The emotional investment that you place in helping your husband at this stage is simply too much. I would encourage you at this stage to indicate to him that his lying and gambling is intolerable and that you need to be away from the behavior. He will need to shift out. Make it very clear to him that you still love and support HIM, but you will not support his behavior.

At this point you need to choose to love him despite the fact that he lies to you. Love is not possession. Love is about knowing when to let go and stop hurting each other. You cannot control what he does at this point, but you can control how you choose to react to him. If he has to find time for help on his own, and it may mean he has to hit rock bottom. However it is important that he knows you are there to support him when he needs it.

In the meantime, I would encourage you to go through some of the exercises in the book to refocus on your needs and finding ways to release stress and relax. It is important that you are able to stay calm and focused at this time.



Good day

First of all, I live in South Africa, English is my second language, so if the grammar is different from yours, my apologies.

I bought the course, went through it and although I found advice in some situations very helpful, I could not find anything that could help me with my problem.

I am 53 years old, married to a high school sweetheart for 30 years. He is a very good man, I have everything to make my life easy, travel a lot. We are the owners of a very successful business. We have 2 sons, one in the USA, married, and one living with us, working.

In the beginning of our marriage, my husband had a serious accident, which he says made him impotent. This caused a whole part of my married life not the ideal situation.

My husband is an extrovert, very funny, loved by other people. He has not many male friends, but many friends we've had for many many years. He has a few lady friends, some single and we all have fun times together. They like him, because he gives them good advice, financial and otherwise and we look like the perfect married couple.

Little do other people know. My husband does not even touch me. I can be naked in the bathroom and he will not even look at me. We have no sex, because of his problems. I am a bit overweight, not much, having problems with gravity at my age.

Another problem - my husband started to criticize me for everything I do or did not do.

I have no in-law problems. If I had, it would be least of my problems. We get along like a house on fire and I am like a daughter to them. My sister in law and myself are even closer than me and my own sister.

Two years ago I was very busy helping my mom to move to a retirement village. One weekend my husband went with me and because my phone's battery was flat, I used his to sms my son. To my shock, I came upon sms messages like: thinking about you, wish I can sit in the movies with you, holding your hand. I dialed the number - a man with a very nice voice answered. Needless to say I did not sleep that night.

On our way home, I asked my husband about is. He said that he met this man on the internet. Lets call my hubby John and this other man Peter.

He said that they have the same interests in life, same humor and they are just friends. John was suggesting that we get a divorce, since there is not much left of the marriage. I did not want to, because I did not want to upset my son - still in school. We came to an agreement, but I was forever aware of the sms messages and emails written in the night and at work.

I suggested to John that he gets rid of this man, or he must become a family friend, because he cannot have a friend that I had nothing to do with. John's response was that he does not want the man hanging around the house and I must give him time.

One night we had to wish a mutual friend happy birthday and John gave me the phone after he wished our friend first. An e-mail came through, saying that this person had a nice rest, was thinking of John and loves him. I took to phone to John and asked him what is going on. He said this Peter is very lonely, cannot get married. He is also impotent because of a serious operation and he lost his father and brother very recently. I just said he must get rid of him, I cannot deal with an sms like that.

I went to a psychiatrist I knew from my teaching days. He advised me that John should join us in sessions. John was furious and refused. The psychiatrist told me that according to him I cannot find fault with John, adored him and I must tell him that he must stop criticizing me, accept me for who I am and tell him that if he does not stop this relationship with Peter, I am walking out.

I decided to stay.

John was feeling sick one night and I saw an sms coming through on his phone, just a chatting one and

I pretended to be John. After a while, I wrote to Peter who I was and I am going to give him a choice, he either becomes a friend of the family, or I walk out. I told him this situation makes me feel very lonely and I cannot deal with it.

Peter promised to become my friend as well, he will be available with the push of a button and he is very sorry for hurting me. He answered all my questions, he is 36, not married, a bank manager, good salary, an introvert, my husband's best friend and would love to become a friend of the family.

What did I do? Accept him. He was so nice, I actually thought he was a storybook man that became real. Well mannered, treating me like a queen, always bringing something for us etc. We invited him over some nights when I cooked something special. I think our friendship was special, because he wrote e mails to me daily and was a real friend of the family.

Before I knew, he started to come every night, without an invitation. It became a problem, because I work all day and do not have children in school any more, I don't want to cook every night or have a guest every night.

Neighbors and friends started to ask about this man constantly being with us, because he actually only slept at his own home. I started to avoid neighbors and family, to avoid questions. We neglected our friends, because of the age difference between us and Peter. But, we were all happy and traveled together, because we enjoyed the same things.

We even went to Disney World together. One of John's very old friends, being 60 years old, invited herself to join us, which was fine, because we had an 8 sleeper apartment. We met my son and his wife there. I ended up in me and children spending time together, and John, Peter and the friend Jane, being together. I just decided that nothing is going to spoil my holiday and had a whale of a time. My son overheard Peter asking John why he always wants to spend time with the children. Funny question if you only see your kids once a year! Jane on the other hand, who is not happily married, thought that this well mannered Peter fell out of heaven and would not leave him alone for one minute, her being 30 years older than him. I just thought she is insane and left her to make a fool of herself.

We carried on and on. Some evenings the men went to the gym and some evenings we'll watch a movie and some evenings they will massage each other's muscles - sitting in front of the computer all day, or massage each other's feet - being tired.

My sister in law asked me what is going on, why is this man always with us. What do I answer her, I don't know what your brother's problems is, we have no sex in any case? No I just said he is lonely.

Peter bought a new flat and we helped him furnish this flat, everything new and I thought he will now stay there, beautiful view, new furniture, new stove, fridge everything. No, he practically lives with us. I do water aerobics 3 times a week after work. When I come home, wet and tired, he is there and the men want to eat. Some evenings I just want to be 53, relax after work and dress in my comfy clothes and have peace.

Our friend Jane, all of a sudden has lots of business in our city, although she lives in Cape Town, about 1300 kilometers from us. She organizes everything with the men, going to shows, coming to us etc. She sometimes comes every 2 weeks. I managed to get one thing right - I don't want her to stay with

us - lack of space in our new house in a complex. One day I was just fed up and I said to my sister in law that she must come shopping with me the Sunday afternoon, Jane is coming and she did not let me know, only the men and I had enough. Jane sent me an e mail apologizing for not taking me into consideration.

Towards the end of last year, the two men decided to go to the Seychelles. I as invited as an afterthought and John suggested why don't I rather go to the USA for Christmas and New Year to my son and his wife. Before he knew, I was booked on a plane and I just could not be bothered any more, having to watch the men or try and find out what is going on. I was very sad that we had to spend Christmas apart, but grateful for the opportunity to be with my kids.

Just after I returned, John and I had an argument and I started packing. John said to me that if I leave, he will sell everything on an auction. I told him I am tired of being alone all the time, of shopping alone on weekends. I also told him that I was not the one that is impotent and I want a husband that loves me. He said I must go and find someone that will love me, because he cannot do it, obviously. I said to him that no man will ever have the opportunity to hurt me anymore. I will spend the rest of my life alone. During the argument, I heard a knock on the door and I am sure it as Peter and I don't know what he heard - but when the argument was finished, there was no one. My son said he also heard the knock. I explained to my son that I am sorry if he heard certain things, but his father and myself have differences to sort out. He understood, because he hates having Peter around all day and weekend and says that he misses having his dad doing things with him.

After that argument, John really tried to be nice, to include me in things. He even booked us a weekend to Cape Town, but guess - Peter ended up going with us. I begged my son to go with us too, but he had to work and was not interested in going when Peter is going.

Jane heard that we are coming and offered to bring all the food and eat with us on Saturday night. Her husband did not want to join us earlier, because he does not like my husband very much. John invited more of our friends and I refused to have anything to do with the menu, because John and Jane discussed the meal, excluding me and later I heard Peter saying that Jane will bring crayfish - so it was discussed with him as well. John phoned Jane and asked her to discuss the meal with me, because he knew I was right. She hinted that she wanted to come through in the morning and spend the day with us. I just said no, because we want to spend the day together walking and reading.

What happened, I sat there all by myself. I had ligament problems. John offered to take me to a point with the car and then we can all walk on the flat beach - Peter sulking because of that. In the end, the men walked for hours and I sat alone reading. I was very friendly when they returned, making sure I do not spoil a weekend. When Jane and her husband arrived, she spend so much time with Peter and John, that she did not prepare all the food and I had to start setting the table and see what I could save in the situation. Afterwards she kept on phoning John and Peter, thanking them for the nice time.

Peter lately runs after John. If John says jump, he will ask how high. Walk, how far. During the week I had an operation on my foot and John is so helpful - he carries things and meals to me and takes it away and is so kind. The only thing that I miss is having someone to help me bathe or wash, but I refuse to ask, since John is not interested in me.

Peter will also sit in the TV room when John is somewhere in the house. He lately does not even talk to



me when we are alone, or will jump up and help John, even making coffee. I spoke to John last night and said to him I do not want Peter here all the time. He makes me uncomfortable in my own house. He sulks when we invite other people over or just does not join in the party. Peter and I just do not talk anymore, only about country issues, or the weather.

John made a point of sitting with me yesterday, calling Peter to come and sit with me and to make sure I am comfortable. My sister in law says she is going to ask Peter what is his problem, why does he 'live' with us and only sleep at home. I always try to cover.

My question is: how do I know if my husband is gay, or heterosexual? What are the signs? As you can see, I have a good husband, but I am alone. I miss being touched and loved by my husband. Money and material things mean nothing to me at this stage. Sometimes when I look at all the lights in our city, I feel so alone. I cannot discuss it with my kids, although my son says if Peter wants to come to the States with us, he will tell him he is not welcome. I cannot discuss this with anyone, without exposing John. So I started living a life with myself, pretending I am so happy and in the meantime I want to run away.

Please tell me what you think, and this Jane, a friend of over 20 years, what is her story? She claims my husband and my husband's friend. Maybe I would be able to handle it, or tell her straight away she is making a fool of herself hanging all over a man 30 years her junior. But at this stage, I can only take so much at a time and have the tendency to block out everything that I cannot deal with more than my marriage.

When I say something Peter might be hurt, and please understand, he is very nice, and very decent, maybe just lonely? I don't want to hurt him or turn something that is just a good friendship maybe into something ugly.

What do I look for, what must I do and say? Please write more about his problem in your course, because I am sure that cheating with a woman is different that cheating with someone of the same sex. I am really not a jealous person, but this is not normal. I am sure that I am not the only wife who has a husband that is gay, or have a companion in his middle age?

I am looking forward for your reply.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

It certainly sounds as though your marriage is in crisis, and that Peter is having a very heavy influence on the situation you are currently in.

Your email has exposed a raft of issues, but the two most important are the ones I will discuss. The first is your husband's sexuality, and the second is the codependency in your marriage and relationship with Peter.

Homosexuality or heterosexuality are difficult areas to diagnose in a person, as sexuality is a very fluid thing. There is no such thing as 100% homosexual or 100% heterosexual. I prefer to view it as people

sitting at points on a spectrum, exhibiting characteristics that are indicative of either. It is possible to have homosexual tendencies while still identifying oneself as heterosexual. That is the difference between sexual preference and sexual identity.

Your husband's situation is a delicate one, especially when you take into consideration the feelings of your children and friends, as well as your own feelings as his wife of 30 years. One thing is certain: sexuality or sexual preference is not a choice. You have a choice whether you choose to suppress your sexuality or not, but the issue of sexuality itself is one that is deeply ingrained on the soul.

I don't believe your husband is homosexual, but it is hard to say with any certainty. Let's just say for clarity's sake he is bisexual, preferring the company of both men and women. We don't really need to put a label on it. He just is who he is, and despite this it is obvious from your email that you love him very much.

However, an important part of a functional relationship is the meeting of needs. We discuss the meeting of needs when we talk about Maslow's hierarchy in Book 2 (Page 28-30 if you are interested). What we can identify here is that you are having a level of needs met by your relationship, but that without the ability to receive love and acceptance from your husband, you are unable to build on your sense of personal worth, recognition or respect that you need to achieve self-actualization. In this respect, the lack of intimacy from John is inhibiting your growth and leaving your individual needs within the relationship unfulfilled.

Sex and intimacy are the most obvious ways of recognizing worth in a relationship, but it is possible to show intimacy in other ways as long as it is recognized and talked about. The need for validation in the relationship both as a wife and as a person is paramount, and if John is unable to provide this you need to consider your future.

Looking at the situation with Peter, it is something that needs fixing. Because there is a lack of intimacy in your relationship, John has allowed Peter to fulfill this role instead of you. Effectively, you have been replaced, though that shouldn't come as too much of a revelation to you. What has developed here is a codependent relationship. John relies on Peter to fulfill the deficit of intimacy that is not present in your marriage in order to fulfill his personal need for intimacy, and in turn Peter needs intimacy from John to make up the deficit of stimulation from his otherwise empty life. Peter has very few friends other than John. He needs him. John feels he needs him to provide the intimacy that is not present in the marriage. This relationship based on need is very unhealthy.

Can you compete with this? It seems from your email that you can't. You need to talk to John. You need to talk to him about how you are feeling unloved, ignored and unfulfilled. You need to talk to him about the role Peter is playing in your marriage. Is he the glue that is holding this together?

If your marriage is going to survive, Peter is going to have to go. If John is unable to support this, you are going to need to consider how your relationship is going to continue to function.

- \*Are you going to stay married and start dating other men? Do you even want to do this?
- \*Are you going to divorce? Is this what John really wants? Does he want to be married anymore?
- \*How are you going to fulfill your need for intimacy?
- \*Is the nature of your marriage going to change? Are you going to live together as friends only? Can

you do this?

I understand you don't want to hurt Peter, but you need to put your marriage first. He needs to realize this too. I would encourage you to talk to a community support group, perhaps a gay support group or someone who can put you in touch with resources to help you better understand what your husband is going through.

Check out the following sites which have some good resources for straight wives of bisexual and married men:

<http://members.aol.com/tjfronczak/str8spouse.htm>

<http://www.straightspouse.org/internet.shtml>



I have read savemy Marriage 1 & 2 this morning and I feel its going to be a great help but there 1 or 2 other areas I would like advice on that I did not see in the books although I will be going over them again,

I have been married for 19yrs and have been together since I was 18 and she was 15 we have 2 sons 1 approaching 16 the other 13yrs for a while now we have you could say we have been rowing with each other probably no more than the average couple and I take it as the norm.

But my wife went off for last Sun for a couple of days after she said we need to talk and said she was unhappy and needed space away from me I believe the main reason was she said I was smothering her and she felt tight-chested when she or I returned home I do realize I do that now, if she works from home I hover round her like a lost soul, 4mths ago I changed my shift pattern so now I am home every evening and weekend I hadn't taken in the fact that for 12yrs she had girly time on an evening whilst I was at work and now I will admit I want to spend every minute with her.

Now with the help from your book I can alter that. She came home Tues evening and we talked but soon were in tears and she needed to get away again, It just so happens that she was supposed to be away Tue, Wed, Thur, anyway, she had around a 2hr drive to the hotel she was staying and I got a text to say got here OK, off to bed now nite nite, I got a text the next night to say course ran late for dinner will call the next night which see did and was half OK on the phone, Now another point here is when she is away she is with work colleagues or customers and they are men and for a while I have had awful thoughts when she is away but trusted her even though the men at work would say nudge nudge wink wink when I said she was away, I have always said its the men I don't trust in the hotel as its mostly the same crowd and they always converge in the bar until very late and lately I was getting worried if she might give in to temptation and I get frightened and worried. She has made a few changes to herself lately, and I know that could be because she is coming up 40 soon but I still worry there could be other reasons. My problem I have here is I sulk when she is going away mainly of late though I have always preferred her not to be away but its part of her job which she loves and I am proud she has, when she is away I go through angry, Confused, Worried as a lot of the time I don't

know where she is and she makes little contact, I believe she does still care but wants us to have more fun and for me to do things on an evening or a weekend with my Friends so the time we are together we appreciate it but I need to change hence I bought your book, So to sum up I know I am possessive, Jealous at times and always want to be in her company, We have been together for 26yrs and I still love her to bits and want the rest of my yrs with her, She is worth the fight so your advise on my Smothering, Possessiveness, And possibly may have a little jealousy going on and how to cope with my emotions when she is away, I most confirm I don't believe any thing is happening at the moment, no unexplained texts or calls and no reason to believe any thing other than the change of appearance such as losing weight, lower back tattoo, away with work which is part of her job.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

When your wife is telling you that she needs space and feels smothered and tight chested when she is around you, she is trying to convey to you the depth and seriousness of her feeling. How you choose to react to this news is going to determine how easy or difficult this repair process is going to be.

The first thing I want to tell you is that you cannot underestimate the seriousness of this issue. This is not a casual feeling she is having, it is a strong physical reaction to the behavior that you display toward her. Sometimes when you love something or someone so much, you try your best to hold on to it and nurture it and care for it in the hope that it will never leave you. In fact, you are motivated to do this by your fears. Your fear of being dumped, humiliated, or cheated on is your motivation to control this situation as closely as you possibly can. The problem here is that your fear of her leaving you or cheating on you is in fact pushing her further away.

When she told you about her feelings and need to get some space away, she was sending you a cry for help. I want you to consider your actions. You mentioned that you hover over her like a lost soul. Why is that? What other stimuli do you have in your life that can provide a suitable distraction?

In a healthy, functional relationship there is a balance of "we" time versus "me" time. This means that while it is lovely to spend time together as a couple, it is also healthy to have pursuits outside the relationship. This helps both of you develop as individuals as well as give you time to interact with your friends and pursue hobbies and interests that your partner may share. Your wife is focused on her job as well as the relationships she has developed with her work colleagues, and you need to allow her the opportunity to do this without being resentful. Likewise, it is important that you are able to develop interests and set personal goals for yourself, quite outside of the goals that the two of you set as a couple.

I would like you to read a book by David Deida, called *The Way of the Superior Man*. In this book David talks about masculine and feminine energy, and the importance of connecting with your individuality and achieving your personal goals and objectives as well as achieving goals in the relationship. In fact, I wonder if this is where you are at in your relationship. In smothering your wife and being resentful of the time she spends with others, you are inhibiting her ability to realize her personal goals. If she feels you are doing this, your marriage is in serious trouble. This would cause her to evaluate whether you or her goals are more important. In a functional relationship you should be able to do both.



The challenge for you is changing your mindset. Spend some time considering what goals you have in your life that you would like to push yourself to achieve. What goals and visions do you have as an individual? Do you want to achieve more in your career? More in your learning about other people? Do you want to develop new interests and hobbies? Do you want to strengthen your connections with friends?

When we are in relationships, things are constantly evolving. Relationships are partnerships, but within these partnerships we are always being called to new challenges. This is growth. Growth can apply to achieving goals as well as growing in love. If you stifle one, however, you risk compromising the other.

This is not an issue about your wife spending time away from home. This is not about the men your wife associates with. This is about your reaction to your fears. If you let your fears rule you, you will lose the very thing you are trying to save.

Examine your anger, fear, worry, confusion, sulking, jealousy, possessiveness and smothering nature. Has your wife given you good reason to not trust her? Has she betrayed your trust before? You may not understand why she is faithful to you when she is exposed to such temptations, but you need to have faith. Have faith in the fact that your wife is still married to you because she wants to be. Have faith that you have a family with her because she loves you. Have faith and support her in realizing her dreams and she will reward you with love and support in realizing yours. Remember the person she fell in love with. Were you the same smothering, needy person? Or were you the confident and capable man who was fun to be around and a joy to come home to.

If you want to turn this around you need to do some serious self-examination. Examine your thoughts and fears. Ask if they are justified. Consider what it must be like for her to come home to. Then it's time to set goals and work towards being the husband that is supportive and loving without expectation. Be her lover and friend, not her keeper.

Have faith in your wife and in yourself.



I have been married for 25 years, I am 51 my wife is 44. We have a son aged 22 & a daughter aged 19. Back in October 2006, my wife left me, it was a complete shock to me. In September, our 25th anniversary, she sent me a lovely card, thanking me for 25 wonderful years. Back in August 2006, her mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she died in Feb 2007. This is obviously a major issue in our relationship, my wife thinking is there more to life, life is too short and similar things. She also had the opportunity to go to Hong Kong with her work, she was afraid to ask me if she could go, knowing I would not like her going without me. She started to go out after work and coming home late for a few weeks, this started to worry me, one night we had a big row and she left. She admitted later the argument was a way to get out so she could go to Hong Kong, she went. For about 4 months she stayed with her friends mum, she now has moved into a flat on her own. Also last year I found out she had accumulated a lot of debt. I have been managing the money as well as I can. I know she will not come back to this house, I believe she feels guilty about the debts. About 13 years ago I foolishly had

an affair, very short time, with a friend of hers, I did it to get more of her attention, although we had a good marriage. About 6 months later she left me and moved in with a man she had met at work. This was not a big love affair for her. We got back together and moved house. Everything seemed great until she left, intimacy was good, we talked and didn't argue much. Because of the debt we could not go out much or spend much. We still go out for dinner and things, but because its not very regular, sometimes 2 or 3 weeks apart, I feel the need to talk about our relationship, she says that I have not changed and am too clingy, I say if we saw more of each other we could just have a good time and maybe fall in love again. She says she is not sure if she can live with me, but says she loves me, but she will not tell me like she used to. We are selling our house, and will pay our debts, I will move in to a flat with our daughter for a while, our son moved out about a year ago. My wife also admits she is depressed, and does not like herself. She has always suffered low self esteem, even before we met. I keep reassuring her that I love her and am willing to be patient and help her sort her problems out, but I don't know if she sees me as the problem. I have suggested counseling; she said she would think about it. I don't think there is anyone else involved.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

A traumatic or significant event in the life of a loved one can trigger thoughts about the fragility of life and cause people to re-evaluate relationships. This is a time when relationship troubles are quite common, so please don't feel as though this is a reflection on you. In fact, the death of a loved one is one of the most common triggers that cause people to examine their relationships and their part in it, and often this examination can bring forth some regrets and negative feelings.

It is important to remember that this is a process that in all likelihood was unavoidable, and the grief path that your wife chose to take is indicative of her particular response to the death of her mother, not the strength or success of your relationship.

Every relationship goes through stages, and the fact that you have been married for 25 years would indicate that you are well past the heady days of lust and romantic love, and more into what we choose to call real love. Real love is when you recognize differences in your partner and you love them. Real love is when you both evolve and change as a couple as you both experience life and ageing, and forge a deeper and more meaningful connection. Many people live happily in these relationships without issue, but the death of your wife's mother has caused her to evaluate her life and relationship, and she has perhaps found that the relationship she has at the moment is not what she had imagined it would be.

The trap people fall into with marriage is that real love does require maintenance. Every day we are called to find new ways of loving our partner and expressing this love as we grow in love and understanding together. If you neglect the need to maintain your love, it becomes easy to fall into habits, perhaps take each other for granted, and become friends more than two people who love each other.

I believe when your wife says that she doesn't love you like she used to or that she doesn't have any feelings, she sees the idea of romantic love to be the only type of fulfilling love there is. This indicates to me that she lacks the understanding or perspective to recognize that love takes many forms, and a

bump in the road or a loss of those strong feelings of lust and infatuation doesn't mean the love has died. It simply means that the love has taken a deeper and more meaningful form, perhaps one that she doesn't fully understand or know how to contribute to anymore.

If your wife leaves the marriage in pursuit of love again, she will follow the same pattern. It will start with lust and romantic love, but the love will change. That is a certainty. Some women and men go their entire lives in pursuit of romantic love and never really grow. What she has with you may not be as exciting as it was 25 years ago, but this doesn't mean that you don't love each other. It simply means that you need to find new ways of expressing this love and intimacy.

Are you ready to give up on your marriage? You mentioned that you are selling your house and will move into a flat with your daughter. How are these actions going to bring you and your wife closer together? Is selling the house about paying off your debts or about giving up on your marriage? How is your wife going to feel about the house being sold? Do you feel that paying off the debt is going to help break down the barriers between you, or is it going to create new ones?

You also mentioned that your wife is depressed. Has she sought any treatment following the death of her mother? What assistance is she receiving? The fact that she is living away from you, in a flat on her own, in debt and has low self esteem would indicate that she needs some assistance, or at least someone to talk to in order to put this change of circumstances into perspective.

I want you to maintain regular contact with her, calling her or seeing her at least once a week to discuss how she is doing. I want you and your children to encourage her to seek counseling, firstly on a one-on-one basis, and as she improves you may want to join her for some joint sessions. It is important that she is able to start this process of healing and finding new meaning from her mother's death.

Grief responses can be re-examined and it is possible for your wife to get some positive meaning from all of this. She may develop a new appreciation for the connections she has with her children. It may be that she needs to devote more time to her career and doing things that she loves. As long as you are able to support her no matter what her choice is, your marriage has a good chance of surviving this.

Love is not possession, and it is important that you are able to communicate with her openly and support her no matter what path she chooses. Her mother's death has caused her to re-evaluate everything in her life, including her relationship with you, and it is important that you are able to show her support.

Maintain regular contact because you want to support her, not because you want to rush her back into being your wife. Focus on being her friend. Support her and listen to her. Try your best to make every interaction as positive as possible.

The key to your marriage is in helping her get the counseling and assistance she needs, and to support her as a friend at a time when she needs you the most. Be her friend. Work on rebuilding her trust. There will be time for reintroducing intimacy and couplehood later.

HIS REPLY:

Thanks for your reply, she is not pursuing romantic love, she insists there is no man involved, and she

does not want that. I am not ready to give up on our marriage yet, but she still says she doesn't know if she can live with me. Selling the house was her idea to pay off the debts, mainly incurred by her. She has seen our doctor about depression, he advised only to take herbal remedy, St Johns Wort. She is reluctant to go for any counseling. I am trying to be supportive, suggesting we see each other at least once a week, to get to know each other again, she still sees this as too pushy, she insists that she makes contact, not me. She does not want me to see her flat yet, she said that that is the only thing she has any control over at the moment, she will invite me when she feels ready. When I saw her last week, I asked if she wanted to be with me, she said no, but when the house is sold, the debts are paid, the pressures will be gone, and there may be a chance for us. I feel that she feels that being on her own at the moment she has no need to give commitment to any one about what she does and when she does it, she did say that her problems of low self esteem are before we met, she still feels she is overweight, and would feel better if she were slimmer, she has lost weight previously but put it back on. I have told her I love her no matter what size she is, but she says she needs to feel good for herself, I can understand this. I still don't know if I should back off more and not make any contact, to let her miss me, or contact her more and try to be more easy going, but this does seem to push her away more. I hope this answers your questions to me.

MY REPLY:

If the decision to sell the house was hers, in order to pay off the debts, then that's fine. My initial concern was that it was being sold in the belief that she did not want to live in the house again. However with the sale of the house a level of stress is being removed from the situation, and for that reason I applaud the action.

I am concerned about your wife's approach to treatment for depression, particularly in the fact that all she is doing is taking a herbal remedy. I understand that St Johns Wort is affective in treating depression in many people, but counseling is equally important to deal with the issues surrounding the depression. Medication enables you to function and in many cases helps you cope with the situation, but it does nothing to remedy the issues that may have triggered the depressive episode.

This is a frustrating situation. She has low self-esteem, insists that she initiates all contact, is in considerable debt, is receiving medical supplements for the treatment of depression, yet believes that there may be a chance of saving the marriage once the pressure is gone. This is not about her removing the stresses from her life, and has nothing to do with her weight. The stress is always going to be there unless she makes concrete steps towards fixing it and finding ways to manage stress.

Again, you cannot control her actions, but you can control your reactions to her. One thing you need to insist on is that she needs to maintain contact with you at least once a week. This is meeting you half-way. This is not about you and her getting back together. This is about her being accountable to somebody for measuring her progress in managing her stress and depression. If she is not able to be accountable to you, she needs to do so with a therapist or counselor. That is the choice that needs to be made. If it's not you, it's a counselor.

She needs to understand that the decision to want to save her marriage, either now or at a time in the future, is a decision that needs to be made by both of you. Saying there may be a chance later once she sorts herself out is meaningless. A marriage is a partnership, and even though she is not able to participate in the relationship right now, she needs to offer you some indication that she is able to participate in some self-help.



She doesn't have to commit to the marriage at this stage, but you need to insist that she commits to helping herself out of this, either with your assistance or the assistance of a counselor. St Johns Wort simply won't be enough. If she is unable to participate in this process of self-healing, then you need to reduce contact with her. You may have no other choice than to be supportive and help her when she finally feels she needs it.



I seem to be in a situation that most people are lucky enough that that will never be in. I met my wife over the Internet over 10 years ago. We were together for 6 years visiting each other for 3 months at a time taking turns flying back and forth. We were married in 2005 aug. She moved over soon after, the 10 months she was here i Had a Commute Job working 12 hours shifts on a 3,4,3 day a week schedule, I also fell under the influence of an Internet game addiction. During this time she became very home sick largely due to me not knowing what i was doing and misjudging her needs, her mom then became very Sick and had a nervous breakdown. This made things much worse on our end. My game addiction had me almost entirely blinded i did not know the full extent of my actions "lack of attention, not being the friend and companion i always was the 6 years before" I always professed my love every day and every night, and reinforced it with holding embracing and other small actions and in my delusionment I thought it was enough, the game distorted my entire reality. She just weeks before she left had a nervous breakdown beat on me and told me everything she had not before very directly. It broke my heart it was enough to open my eyes even while in the grasp of the addiction.

Just a week after the breakdown we were crying in each other arms and she begged me to move to Australia, i was overjoyed I was being given a chance to make right what i had done so wrong. The following night she was so happy and even told me "you cant understand how happy it made me when you said yes" I cried i was so happy that she loved me enough to give me this chance and that i could still make her so happy, I love her more than life itself.

The last few nights before she left to go back to Australia we were making plans on how to get me home to her there as quickly as possible down to where i was going to work. A week after she had left i got a call telling me "I think its best we go our separate ways" I broke down immediately My world exploded, I have little to no contact with her now, She said "you cant live here, you wont be happy, you will be resentful of me" "We just don't have compatible personalities" I cant make her understand that neither of those are true and everything i see her do and what she says tells me that she is keeping her distance because she does love me and is afraid that if she gets close again she will get hurt again, that she's afraid and not allowing me any contact in an attempt to wean her self off me. I just recently got a message from her that she has been thinking about going to another country for a year allow. I died when i read that, alls i see is "im go here so i can break my ties with you so you cant find me, im going to kill our love because im afraid and don't think your worth fighting for. My depression is nearly complete, ive had suicidal thoughts which for me is extreme im Christian and burning in hell is the last thing i want. My life is falling apart and i cant reach the heart of the woman i love, the window is closing as she weans herself off me. I'm a poor man i took a risk buying your books but im desperate, i have little hope and she killing it. The book can't help me really till i have stable contact... I'm lost alone in the dark..

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Your first step in saving your marriage is going to involve you pulling yourself together. Before you are ready to save your marriage you must first save yourself. You speak of depression, suicidal thoughts, desperation, and an internet gaming addiction.

Take a step back and look at these issues. Is this the person that your wife fell in love with? Is your depression and suicidal thoughts helping make you into the person she would want to come home to?

Your wife left you because over the course of your internet gaming addiction you were not present in the relationship. Internet dating and long distance relationships are enormously difficult, and communication is paramount, much more so than for conventional relationships. Once you got married and she shifted here to be with you, she gave up a large part of her life. She moved away from family, friends, and all connections she had to her old way of life. What she required from you was an indication that you were as committed to the relationship as she was.

So what do you do now?

You need to start by seeing a counselor. Discuss with them the issue of your internet addiction. Talk to them about how the addiction made you feel and the affect it had on your family. Talk to a counselor about your depression and suicidal thoughts. It is important that you do this as a way of understanding how these thoughts came to be, and to find alternative perspectives and meaning from your situation.

This is a relationship that got off to several bad starts, especially given the fact that you hadn't lived together for more than 3 months at a time. The 10 months that your wife spent with you after you got married was the longest time you had spent together in 10 years of knowing each other, and the experience was made even more difficult with your internet addiction. Neither of you have been fully present in the relationship in all the years that you have known each other. You may feel that you know each other well, but you have never let go of your individuality and the habits picked up from your single lives. Your lack of attention and affection is a learned behavior because you have never known any different. Her lack of communication with you is indicative that she also lacked the skills to live as a couple.

If you are serious about saving your marriage, you need to start by seeking help for your addiction and depression issues. Find meaning and understanding from what has happened to you, and identify what behaviors and habits need modifying if you are going to make the transition from single to married life. This involves thinking about "us" before you think about "me". Do what you feel is in the best interests of the marriage.

Once you are in a clearer state of mind, it may be in the best interests of your marriage to go to Australia to show her through your actions, not your words, that you are capable of being present in the relationship. Become the type of person she would like to come back to. Be the person she first fell in love with.



I'm so lost i don't know what else to do...my husband is leaving me and my 2 kids for another woman. He wants a divorce. I've been so depressed I committed suicide. I had a drug overdose but was saved. The doctor said it would have been fatal if my maid did not come to my help in time. When she called him to tell him i was overdosed, he didn't bother and told my maid to do what she need to...my maid panicked and begged him to come home. He did eventually. But the 1st thing he did when he arrived, instead of calling for ambulance, he yelled at me and tell me to die so that he can move on with his life.

What should i do? I have two girls aged 10yrs & 15 yrs old. Kids are also under a lot of stress. We used to be such a happy and blessed family. He was a good father and husband...until the affair happened. He used to care and enjoy the kids and the family. Now we don't get to see him. He only promises to maintain the kids. But my kids are so hurt to see him behaving like this. Occasionally when he comes back for dinner, he'd rush thru and meal and leave. He doesn't take interest in the kids anymore.

How should i deal with the situation???

I still love him a lot and hope that in time if he sees that I and the kids are always here for him, he'll come back to us. But will that be possible if he's so in love with another woman out there?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The first thing I need to convey to you is the seriousness of your actions. Any attempt on your life is very serious and is indicative of a need for counseling. Was it depression that motivated your actions or was it a need for attention?

Either way if you are serious about saving your marriage you need to indicate clearly to your husband that you are worth coming back to. Threatening to kill yourself is only going to push him further away because it places further expectation on him to save you as well as the relationship.

You need to understand how unfair this is, both to your husband as well as your children. Have you been to counseling? Are you finding ways to understand your behaviors and what led you to make the decision to overdose?

You don't need your husband to save you. Looking at the way he reacted, you tried this and it didn't work. You need your husband to respect you. To do this you need to be his equal.

Putting aside the reasons he left you, what is going to make him come back to you? A woman that has just tried to overdose? Or the vivacious, confident woman he first fell in love with and had two children with. Remember the reasons he first fell in love with you. Focus on being the type of person that is easy for him to love, someone who loves him unconditionally, and doesn't simply love him because she needs him.

Show him through actions, not words, that you are his equal. Go to counseling. Understand your depression. Understand the rejection you felt and your motivations to overdose. Discover ways to channel feelings and emotions so that you can use them to better yourself rather than let yourself be defined by them. Then focus on being the best person you can be. Simply love him and all those around you, and believe that the love you radiate will make his decision more difficult.

In order to save your marriage you need to make yourself into the woman he would rather be with, better than the woman he is currently with. You can do this by going to counseling, finding ways to be a stronger person, and to love him through actions.

For him to believe he can love you again, you firstly need to believe it. Love yourself. Love him. And have faith that this love will bring him back.



Hello, I guess I can give you some info on our history. We have been married for about four years now. My wife has abandonment issues from her mother leaving her with her grandmother in Mexico from birth, but bringing her brother to the US. At a young age she was sexually molested by a family member. She has had suicidal thoughts. I tried to get her to get some help with these issues, but she said she never wanted to talk of them again. I can now see my mistake. She is the ONLY woman I have ever been with, first love, first kiss. I can say our problems started early last year. My wife started going out to clubs with her cousin and got a lot closer to her brother. I am not someone who likes going out to clubs, but made the attempt to go out together. I noticed they went out in a group. I felt left out a lot and decided to let her go out when she wanted. I made sure to let her know that I enjoyed being with her and preferred her home or doing something with me. She continued to go out. One night her brother called drunk and crying that he wanted everyone (dancing group) to come over. After an hour or two I noticed my wife drinking a little more than I liked. Before I knew it she was extremely intoxicated. She passed out on the sofa. Later when I was ready to leave I tried to wake her up, but she pushed me away and asked where her brother's friends were. She said she wasn't going home with me and was going to stay. The next day she apologized and she didn't know what happened. I didn't bring up what she said, I guess out of fear of what she would say. She continued to go out in the group dancing. One night we were visiting our god-children and she received a text. It was from one of the her brother's friends, one of the ones she mentioned the night she got drunk. It had a romantic poem on it, I don't remember exactly what it said. When we left she noticed I was quiet. She asked what happened and I blew up at her, letting her know everything that I knew. She started crying saying she didn't remember her night of drinking and couldn't find her message from her friend. After a couple of days we started to try to fix our problems. Since then, we have had problems. The majority of our problems have stemmed from her family. She is usually the first person they call if there is a problem and she does not hesitate in helping them. I don't mind her helping her family, but they do not appreciate what she does for them. She takes it as her responsibility to drop everything and help them. I have a problem with this because I feel as her husband I should get the same attention. She has had her grandmother, aunt, two cousins, and her brother live with us. I have to admit that when I get angry I shut down and do not talk to her. I know this is wrong, but feel that it is better than yelling and saying something I will regret later. The



worse part of this that since we continued to have arguments one after another the time I don't talk got longer and longer. It seems that its the same problems which makes me feel ignored and not as important in my wife's life. Not trying to justify this at all. My wife likes to go back home and visit her family in Mexico when she can. I have told her I don't like her going for a long time because I miss her. She has gone for first two weeks, then three, and finally last June for a month. I didn't go for money reasons. During her last trip her uncle got intoxicated and crashed his car. He was in critical condition and our course I sent money to help. I got upset because at first my wife didn't want to tell me how he got into an accident. She also would call me and just complain that SHE was the one that had be with him. She was in the hospital with him for three of her four weeks. When she got back there was tension and she had an attitude so we had another argument. It was about three weeks and I told her I needed time to calm down. She wasn't going home after work and going out on the weekends with her friends. When she was home se seemed miserable. She then told me that she wanted a separation. She was always one who disagreed with separations. Saying that they were for people who didn't have the courage to end it or were having an affair. So when I heard her say this that is what I took it as. About a week later she moved out. I gave our 30 day notice on our apartment. During my month alone she came by a few times. Near the end we seemed to be able to talk without fighting. I noticed she wasn't wearing her wedding ring and said it was because it hurt her. We split up a lot of our possessions, she took most of it to her new apartment. One item she said later upset her was the box of condoms. I told her to take half, just in case. After that I didn't hear from her for more than a week, I left her messages. Finally we had an appointment with a marriage counselor. During the appointment I found out she was upset about the condoms, and she was not sure if she loved me. That is when I said I knew she was not well mentally at times and had suicidal thoughts. That ended our marriage counseling. The therapist said she had to get help. A week later she went on a trip to visit our god-children. Before she left we had breakfast and I asked her if she was going to get help. She said yes, and I asked I could get an answer on what she wanted to do with our marriage soon. She kind of said jokingly that if we could be friends with benefits. I told her I was there to work on it. It was over a week after she got back that I heard from her. She called me and asked to see me. She sounded happy and wished me a good day. When we saw each other we talked a bit and she invited me to dinner. I was feeling that everything would begin to go on the right path. Then she said that we have hurt each other enough and it was time to separate. She then asked if I wanted another night with her, and I said yes. A few days later I asked to talk to her again and now see I made a mistake. I wrote a list of things I was to try to change. She told me to them for myself and not for her. We talked and she said she wanted to she what she could do on her own. She wanted to be alone, then would say that this is probably the biggest mistake of her life. So I asked her to take time, talk to her counselor and let me know later. Then she said she wanted to be single, but wasn't in a hurry for a divorce. I am confused because single and alone are two different things. Also, should I really take what she is saying as how she feels due to her problems. Should I try to contact her? Should I give her a divorce a soon as I can? I want to see her, but I did say that if didn't want me I wouldn't bother her. I don't want to throw everything away, but want to respect her decision even if it hurts me. She said she has no bad feeling towards me and would like to remain friends. Do I take her up on this, and if so how? Can I invite her to a movie or dinner? Keeping the conversation friendly and not try to get her back, just as friends. Do I take her up on her friends with benefits offer? Will this end my marriage or give me my opportunity to see her? Should I write her a letter and let her know where I stand? Giving her the option on contacting me. If I don't hear from her then I get my answer. What is the next step I have in saving my marriage?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

It sounds as though this is as much a personal problem for your wife as it is a marriage problem. The issue for people in your situation is that it is often hard to make the distinction between something that your wife has personal issues with, and/or something that is symptomatic of your marriage dynamic.

I'm going to start by telling you that the living situation you are in is unhealthy, though it's not unusual for Mexican families to be very close. Having so many people in your house does come at a cost to the relationship, especially in allowing you both time to bond as a couple. It's great that your wife is so motivated to help her family, but as a married couple, it really needs to be a decision that is made by both of you, not just one.

I believe a lot of the issues in your marriage stem from your inability as a couple to communicate. It's not an unusual thing to have happen, especially since we get so used to living as individuals when we are single, and we make decisions based on our own best interests.

This all changes in a relationship, and it is necessary to think less of yourselves as separate entities and more as part of a couple. Every decision each of you make should have the interest of the relationship first. When your wife makes decisions outside the relationship, you have decided to say nothing and ignore her. Ignoring her doesn't get her attention, and its a poor way of communicating your feelings.

When she makes a decision that is outside the relationship, no matter how big or small, you need to communicate to her that in order for you to support her, you need to feel as though she supports you. In that respect she needs to involve you in decision making and share information with you, especially where money and other resources are involved.

Where do you go from here?

The first step is in resisting the temptation to take responsibility for everything that has happened in the relationship. As part of a couple there are things that you can take responsibility for, but there are a number of things that your wife needs to take responsibility for too. Share the blame, don't take it all.

I want you to maintain communication as much as possible, and to focus on being as positive as you can. If friends with benefits works for you, then give it a go. Avoid the temptation to ignore her and play games as that will only push her away. Try inviting her over for a meal. Focus on being her friend, and someone she trusts and can communicate with. Even if she is no longer living with you, being her friend and maintaining regular contact can ensure that you are a regular part of her life.



## Affairs



The just of the issue is that my wife told me about a week ago that she cheated on me. Her behavior over the last few months had been troubling to me and not being very good at communicating, never prodded into what was going on. Back in the winter time she had talked to me about issues and we performed a 'mock' separation. That lasted a few weeks and it did feel like I had a little better understanding of things, I thought. I've had complete trust in her until she told me this.

I went through many emotions, and still am, feeling sad one day, feeling like I've accepted the end to the marriage on the other hand. I essentially spent the first week telling her my feelings which were basically that I love her, we have had communication issues, there have been many things preventing us from truly having a great relationship (she has in the past 2 years been addressing depression, speaking with a counselor, etc...) but that we have a base of love and caring that we can build from.

She was also a stay at home mom for the last 7 years and is now interviewing and going back to work. I think she's spent her life feeling like she's been making decisions based on what everyone else wants but not necessarily her.

She has a commitment issue where once things started getting serious back when we were dating, she started putting up a lot of walls and having intimacy issues.

She felt very bad about having the affair. The problem is, whenever I ask if she wants to work on it, it seems like she doesn't know. I know she continues to see him and speak with him on the phone. If she goes out, I don't say anything but I think she knows that I realize she is going to see him. She says "I love you but I like him". It seems like she doesn't know what she wants. We have 2 kids, 6yrs and 4yrs old, and with the fact that I know we love each other and care about each other a lot, I feel like it may be a good basis to rebuild. It's like she's on the fence almost with a slight excitement level at some 'new' thing, but yet fearing that she's making a big mistake and not wanting to lose what she has.

I know I don't do a lot of things right and I wish there was one thing I could say to her to make her say "I want to work on our relationship and stop with the other relationship" Since she had not worked over the last 7 years, we went into debt and I feel that I spent a lot of emotional time on that while failing at us. I also feel like not telling her everything about how I feel since it seems to be so up and down. She seems to get upset that one day I say one thing and the next day I say something else. I want to stop before I push her away to much. My anxiety is up quite a notch and sometimes I just don't know how I feel. She asks, "How do you know you want to be married to me?" My answer is basically that I love her, she is gorgeous, caring, when I picture my life in the future I picture it with her, when something good happens I want to share it with her, etc...

I don't know if there is someone else out there that I may be able to feel that way for but I have someone right in front of me that I would prefer to pursue and improve with.

Any insights or suggestions would be great. I'm totally at wits end and don't know what to do or how to do it properly.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission.

Being faced with the reality of infidelity and depression can be a very powerless and distressing time for you personally, and it is times like this that many people struggle to find explanations for what is going on, and struggle even further with how to deal with a situation like this.

As much as you feel a lot of the power has been taken away from you, there are several things that you do need to do if you are going to save your marriage. Knowing that you want to be with her is a good first step, and communicating your reasons for wanting to stay in the marriage is a good way of indicating your commitment to your partner.

Your partner has fallen in love with the idea of romantic love, and it is a very different type of love to what she has after being married for so long. Romantic love is intoxicating, and consuming, and highly addictive, but it is not real love. Lust is perhaps a better description, and a lot of it is motivated by the fact it is something new and different, and also by its forbidden nature.

You need to insist that if your marriage is going to survive, she needs to cease all contact with this person. While she is still in contact with this person you have no chance of being able to rescue this marriage. In saying that she loves you and she likes him, she wants the security and stability that her marriage offers, but wants the adrenalin and lust that her affair gives her as well. What she needs to realize is that he adrenalin and lust will not last. This level of the relationship can last up to 6 months, but beyond that a greater level of commitment is required.

Leaving you is going to have a huge impact on both of your lives as well as the lives of your children. Divorce is much more than an emotional decision, and the impact of a divorce is far-reaching, both physically and financially.

Your first step is in insisting that if she wants to remain married she needs to cease contact with this man. The second step is in letting her know that you will support her in finding and recreating love in your relationship. You might need to get a babysitter and go away as a couple for a few days. Spend some time together as a couple and discover how to reconnect as a couple. Go to counseling to understand more about romantic love and what motivates her to look for this type of fulfillment. She may also need to look at what decisions she needs to make within your marriage to re-establish her sense of worth or value to the family. You may need to make some big changes in your marriage when your wife returns to work, and you need to support her in realizing her goals.



You need to let your wife know that her happiness can be achieved while staying married to you, and that mediation or counseling is a way to actively listen to each other's individual needs in the relationship, and to help meet some of those needs.

- Insist that she stop contact with her lover
- Go away for a weekend together
- Discuss changes that can be made in the marriage to accommodate her self-worth
- Make her feel valued in your relationship

HIS REPLY:

Andrew, I appreciate the feedback. I have a quick question though: Is it possible to save a marriage if right now it seems I'm the only one that wants to work on it? I feel right now it's hard for her to see through the smoke and realize that we should exhaust every ounce of energy trying to improve the relationship and bring back what you refer to as the romantic love. That's kind of the struggle right now for me is trying to prevent myself from saying anything to push her away yet trying to be there for her and have her feel comfortable since we are still in the home together.

On Tuesday while talking with her on the phone (which we do numerous times a day) I had kind of brought up how it seems like the right thing to do would be to try. She got a bit upset it seemed and said "fine" but then I kind of said "no, I don't want to make you" or something crappy along those lines. I feel like I want to take on this extremely large challenge of being supportive and there for her while working to save the marriage in the background without her realizing it yet. Like we will kind of live semi-separate lives under the same household and at the same time working however I can bit by bit to save and improve the relationship. Our plans/agreement was basically that we would separate once she went back to work and we were able to save up enough money for me to get an apartment. I had assumed that this was to happen sooner than later (I assumed that is what she wanted). She said that isn't the case. We still sleep in the same bed at the end of the night.

I guess I am wondering if it would be beneficial for me to stand up and say:

- 1) We are going to work on this because the alternatives are way too costly.
- 2) We are going to give it effort, it won't be easy but the rewards will be great
- 3) You have to stop contact with the other person
- 4) Let's do this together.

Basically telling her that that's what we're going to do. I think the thing is that she would feel again that someone is controlling her life and she's not making the decision. My fear would be her pulling emotionally even farther away than she has and maybe she say "fine" and maybe she'd say "I'll stop contact with him" but actually being more deceptive. It's seems to be a very fine line right now that I need to ride. I feel like it's in her best interest to be able to take control and decide she wants to save the marriage. I feel the best chance is while I'm still in the house with her.

I completely agree with you on the romantic love idea and how it won't last. The only concern is sometimes people need to figure stuff out for themselves and it's like I'm waiting for her to wake up. Maybe she can't wake up while I'm in the house. Maybe it would take being apart in order to come

together. I just don't want to look back and say that I didn't try with every ounce of my energy to make it work. I think with the depression more under control, going back to work and having that feeling of self worth, that things would be better.

How does one proceed saving a marriage if at this time it appears that it's only me that wants to work on it?

Sorry for the rambling. As you are obviously aware, it's not easy and I know there is no easy solution. I asked her this morning to think about one thing about me that to make me a better person I could work on in the future. Basically wording it as trying to improve myself. She said she couldn't think of anything. She laughed and said "It's not you, it's me".

Could it just be that's it over even if 2 people get along great? I don't want her to take the easy route, which really in the end isn't the easy route.

Thanks again Andrew. I continue reading the material and am trying to apply it especially when I start getting down. It's still early but hopefully I'm a work in progress.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for the feedback. I am encouraged by the perspective you have, and at this stage your greatest chance of saving your marriage is in maintaining contact with her and preferably staying in the same home. I am also really encouraged that you are still sharing the same bed, even when things are less than perfect.

There is a lot to be said for routine, and it is good to maintain regular couples routines like sharing a house. The longer you maintain a sense of normalcy and routine, the harder it will be for her to make the break.

Regarding you both making future plans, I don't believe that the reality of a separation is going to sink in while she stays in the family home and you shift out. If you make the commitment to shift out, you are entitled to half the family home. Not only are you entitled to have this, but it is wise to do so in recognition that life will change for the both of you. If your wife has the impression that she will retain the family home then not a lot is going to change for her. She needs to understand that her decisions are going to have significant consequences for her future. Making it unnecessarily easy for her is not doing either of you any favors.

You need to focus on keeping the communication open and fostering an environment in which your wife feels comfortable sharing feelings with you.

Keep this commitment to communication regular, perhaps every few days. You can either sit down as a couple or go out for coffee. This is an opportunity to share feelings and monitor progress.

I would also encourage you to take a look at Chapter 7 of book 2, looking at "Love is a Doing Word". Find small ways to demonstrate your love and support. This could be as simple as keeping up with the cleaning at home, bringing home a favorite packet of cookies, making an extra cup of coffee in the mornings, or leaving a note in your wife's lunch. Sometimes the small things can make a big difference.

It's not going to happen overnight, but hang in there.

HIS REPLY:

Thanks Andrew. I appreciate your books and information. It's great to read things that relate so much to what is going on. Doesn't make you feel so alone and it helps to sort things out a bit especially in the midst of such confusion. I also appreciate the email feedback you given. It basically has given me the support that what I'm beginning to do is correct.

Just a comment on stuff that I have found and read over the last few days that you might be interested in. One thing I think is important is for me to take this opportunity to improve my own self. All the things that I have done in the past and my various reactions to certain situations need to be fixed for me in the future, whether that future is with my wife or someone else. I've read that I don't 'need' her, I may want her and wish that she would love me, but I don't 'need' her. I think that is an important concept for me as well as to understand that I cannot control what she does. They are difficult concepts but important ones. My basis beginning essentially yesterday is that I'm going to be happy, not pushing or sad, or analyzing, begging, etc.... When she calls on the phone or when I come home from work, all she is going to see is a smiling happy me. I have to create my own happiness, not try and get it from someone else.

Sometimes it will be difficult to be happy when you realize that she might be heading out after I get home from work to be with this other person.

But me having a knee-jerk reaction to every thing she does or says does not do any good I've found. Only pushes her away more. When I evaluated what I have done that seemed to work, giving her a kiss on the cheek while she was still sleeping before I leave for work seemed to spark a response. She said later that evening (last week I believe) that she felt me kiss her and she smiled warmly saying that I hadn't done that in a while. I wasn't consistent in doing that however throughout the week because sometimes I'd find myself very sad in the morning but that is not going to be the case anymore. This morning I gave her a gentle kiss on the cheek. Something so small sometimes goes a long way. As I mentioned, while separated in a sense of ships passing in the night yet sleeping in the same bed, there are still a couple of nights a week where we are both at home hanging out after the kids go to bed. The one thing I'm going to focus on NOT doing during our conversations is to discuss our past, our current situation, or any expected future outcome. I just want to talk. Ask her questions, listen to her more about things, discuss the upcoming career that she'll be starting, etc... I almost want her to see a different me. How I probably was when we dated. I'm taking 100% of the responsibility for the relationship so I can look at ways to improve myself. Whatever the outcome, I will hopefully have transformed into someone who has a better idea of what it takes to create and maintain a sound relationship.

Also, we have to go to her therapist that she had been seeing for the depression on Monday. I've been in a couple sessions with her and my wife in the past, mostly over the winter when we initially went through 'something'. She had told her therapist about the affair. This session isn't necessarily a marriage counseling session but it should be interesting nonetheless. I think the therapist really has a grasp on some of the things that are going on. I'm also going to start going on my own to talk about the anxiety/panic attacks that I've had since I was young.

As you can imagine, they've increased a bit over the last few weeks. I need to get that stuff back in control so I can eat properly again. It's hard for me to eat well when I have a lot of panic attacks so

I've dropped some lbs. All in all I look forward to whatever the future holds, especially looking forward to continuous improvement on my part and addressing many of the issues that I've dealt with such as anxiety and reactions to situations.



I just ordered your e mail books.

My wife is going to file for divorce any day now. We tried working it out and its not going well.

Here is the situation. I had two affairs....one resulted in a child born. My wife cannot deal with this. Now does she want to. She has tried and I was not there when I should have been. I tried changing. And made mistakes along the way...like saying I love you and I will change.

I am in counseling and she is not helping.

What can I do right now to try and prove to my wife I want nothing with that woman or child and want to save my marriage?

I need help...its an emergency?

I do love my wife but I did not know she did not recover from the first affair and she told me this the other day. She says she has no feelings for me. I did beg her to stay.

I spoke with her sister and her sister says she cannot believe she has no feelings for me after staying this long, it happened two years ago and she found out last year.

MY REPLY:

I guess what you are dealing here is not so much a loss of feelings for you, but a reaction to a breach of trust. When your wife tells you she has no feelings for you, I don't think this translates as her not loving you. However you have had two affairs, and in doing so, have indicated to your wife that you are not worthy of her trust. Telling her you love her and will change is meaningless at this stage, as your actions in having a second affair and fathering a child go against this promise.

Words are not going to fix your marriage. Your actions are going to indicate to her how serious you are about staying in the relationship and whether you really are going to make a commitment to change. This may involve some major changes to your life, and saving your marriage may involve you changing jobs, changing neighborhoods, or even changing cities in order to leave your past behind. Are you prepared to do this?

You mentioned you are in counseling. What specifically are you receiving counseling for? What issues are you going through? What behaviors are you trying to understand and change?



Are you making progress? Is this progress measurable?

Telling your wife that you want nothing to do with that woman or child is not going to make your obligations to that child go away. This is something that you are not going to be able to walk away from, and is something that is going to be a part of your life on some level for many years to come.

Your wife has not stopped loving you, however the distrust that she now has for you is the barrier that will stop her from reciprocating your love. If you are going to save your marriage, your wife needs to start trusting you again. This may or may not be possible.

You can't control her reaction to your affairs, but you can control your response to it, and your responses to her reactions. You need to find ways of demonstrating your love, in small ways, so that despite her not liking you at the moment, your support and thought for her is evident. I identify ways of loving your wife in Chapter 7 of Book 2: *Marriages in Extreme Crisis*.

Love is a doing word. Find small ways to do things and demonstrate your love on a very practical level. If she works, make her lunch for her. Make a cup of coffee for her in the morning. Make her breakfast. Leave flowers on her bedside table. Keep up with the housework, or iron her favorite blouse when you are ironing your shirts. It only has to be a small effort in order to sow small seeds of love.

Get her sister to talk with her, as an objective third party to help her deal with her feelings and to help present the facts of divorce to her.

Has she considered how long a divorce can take? Has she considered the financial implications of dividing the marital assets and supporting herself? Has she considered the cost of living and the impact on her life both in the short-term and long-term? The implications of a divorce are significant, and can affect both the physical, financial and even emotional lives of both partners for many years. Divorce is seldom as simple as people imagine it to be, and it seldom brings the feelings of closure or satisfaction that people think it will as well. In fact, if people fully understood the emotional and financial isolation that a divorce brings, they would realize that in many cases divorce is not the easier option. Considering the huge impact of divorce, it makes sense to explore the idea of counseling or at least make an attempt to communicate.

If someone is able to present the facts of divorce to her so she fully understands what she is getting into, you may be able to make some progress and open a dialogue. Other than that, you need to focus on making each interaction with her as positive as possible.

There is hope as long as you are able to keep loving your wife and show her that you do want to change and that your progress is visible and measurable. You have a long road ahead, but there is hope.



Have just purchased your books and I'm in the process of reading the techniques and strategies. However, I'm not sure if my marriage can be saved.

The dynamics: We are both 32 years old, married for 13 years, dated for two years prior to marriage. We have one 12 year old daughter, and my niece that we have guardianship of.

I learned a little over two weeks ago that my wife has been having an affair with a co worker for the past seven months. The other man has already left his wife of eight years and there divorce will be final in six weeks.

My wife now is trying to decide weather to leave me for the other man or try to repair our marriage. Our marriage has gone through many ups and downs over the years. We have struggled with many issues. Marrying young with no education and jobs, we really had to struggle to survive. Until now we had weathered every storm.

The grounds for this affair have been building over the past couple of years. I had become a workaholic that has allowed my focus on our family drift. My wife says that she has felt alone and not important to me, and that I did not really care about her feelings anymore. The final situation that has brought me here today was put into place last November when we moved to another city. She found a new job as a receptionist in an office environment with all new people and many men. Besides the atmosphere of her job, my wife was extremely upset with the house we purchased and blamed me for her discontent with it. The fighting really bloomed when money to move or repair the home became the issue. This argument spawned more arguments about money and how we spent it. She felt that I was controlling of our assets and she her never a part of the picture. All this culminated with her feelings of being left alone and that I did not care about her any more. We never resolved any of these issues, and by March she began confiding in the other man from the office that was like wise in a bad spot in his marriage. She says she felt like they had more in common than us. It was easy to spend time with him because of no stress and pressure. They both had similar marriage problem stories.

On top of everything else, me and my wife have also had sexual difficulties in the marriage for quite some time. We have not been intimate sense March as well. Since January when all the issues kind of came to a head, our relationship between us became more and more distant each day as her and his relationship started to bloom, until in September. I know now that I waited to long, but that's when I had decided to try to resolve all these issues and correct our suffering marriage. This is when the bomb fell out of the sky and she said she did not think we could resolve our problems and that she was sorry but she could not just pick up where we had left off. She denied there was another man until a few weeks later when his estranged wife approached me and asked if I new about their affair. She suggested I look into her cell phone records for proof. When I did I could not believe what I was seeing. She was calling him 300 times a month, text messaging another 400 times per month. Every morning and night while we I was sleeping. Before work, during work, lunch time, after work, week ends, when she was with her family. I learned they have been also shopping together, dating, movies, spending time at his apartment. All when she said she was with our kids and or her female friends. I now know that these were all lies to sneak off together.

The past three weeks have been a living hell for me. I feel guilt for neglecting her and allowing work take me away for us. I know I made a huge mistake allowing us to drift apart and not deal with our problems until now. There is still love in my heart for her. I would still like to resolve our issues and try

to rebuild our marriage better than it was before the affair. My twelve year old daughter and niece will be devastated with our divorce. She says she does not know what to do and is confused. She thinks she loves him and that she would be happier with him. However, her love for our kids and her feelings she says she still has for me have been keeping her at home this long.

I think today I may have made another big mistake. I decided to show up at her work today to pick her up for lunch to talk. She was very unhappy with my action. I think that I must have intervened in her and his lunch hour time.

Because of her negative response to my presents, I decided to give her an ultimatum.

- 1) I love her and want nothing more than to rebuild our marriage however If she wants out then I will grant her a divorce and we can start the planning when ever she wants.
- 2) Rebuild our marriage and family by stopping all contact with this guy, Quitting her job because he works there, Move out of town if that would help. Until she is ready to make her decision and re-commit to our family she should find another place to stay and not see me or our kids.

Do you think I have made a big mistake? What can I do to save our marriage if it can be saved at all?

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

It sounds as though you have had a lot to deal with, and reading your email tells me that you have put a lot of thought into explaining your situation. Thanks for that, as it makes my job much easier.

The first marital issue that I identified is finances, and your focus on working long hours to give you and your family a good life. This is a pretty common problem among couples, as the cost of working those long hours can often offset the financial benefit from the extra pay. This puts you in a really difficult position, as you are getting pulled in two different directions: the first being the need for extra money, and the second factor the need to spend more time at home with your wife and family.

Have you ever sat down as a couple and discussed what each of you wants out of your marriage, and what sort of work/home balance you each would like? I have seen a lot of couples fall apart because of the lack of communication and the differences in marital expectations. Would your wife like you to spend more time at home and have less money coming in each week, or would she prefer to make sacrifices of her time with you so that you can have more money?

Who makes the decisions how the money is spent, and is there a sharing of input into this decision? It sounds from your description that the communication breakdown began with your finances.

Your wife misses your company, and feels as though she has little input into household spending. How do you hope to work around this?

I would encourage you to look at Chapter 4, Combating Conflicts, and see if you can see your way to a resolution that better takes both your feelings into account. Are you prepared to let money issues tear you apart?

You need to spend some time working on your feelings, particularly your ability to both give and receive love. Your wife is drawn to this other man because he listens. If you are going to bring your wife back, you need to make it easy for her to love you, and you need to let her have some say in how money is spent. Look at Chapter 7 for some tips about self-care.

She says she still has feelings for you, and that is a very positive sign. You need to make the time she spends around you a positive one too.

You were right to set down some ground rules for her, and ask her to make a decision. If she still has feelings for you and wants to make an effort for her children, she needs to make a decision. But before she commits to a decision you need to make it easy to be around you. Focus on making your home a positive environment and one in which you can sort out your differences and look forward.

Affairs are a difficult thing, but it doesn't have to be the end. If it was, she would be gone by now. What is keeping her with you? If you are able to address your problems regarding communication and finances, you may find that she is prepared to try.

If you are able to remove the stress and negativity surrounding your marital troubles and become the person she once fell in love with, I'm sure you can save your marriage.

Good luck.

If you have any further troubles then please email me again.



Hi. I have a different situation than I read in your e-book.

My husband of 24 years, Larry, went to his high school reunion in July and "fell in love" with an old high school girlfriend. They are both 58. She lives in a different state so I've been told that this was a phone/e-mail fantasy relationship until August when my husband went on a "fishing trip". He had gotten really secretive, password protecting his e-mail and lowering the screen when I came into the room. I'm pretty computer savvy so I pulled up his deleted file and found numerous "love letters". I was so mad I insisted he get out on the spot. Which I now know was a relief for him.

Then I started listening to his cell phone voice messages. I was never so hurt in my life. I can still hear her voice in my head. This woman is also married. But from her e-mails I found out that she had a boyfriend when she hooked up with Larry.



Larry and I haven't had sex in years (his issue). He says sex isn't important to him. He has always been very cuddly. Lack of sex has been an issue for me. The first time at the marriage counselor, three days after he left me, he said he hadn't been attracted to me in years (ego crusher). And apparently sex is now important again.

I've tried to stay very positive in my dealings with my husband, because I want him back. But I haven't slept but maybe 4 hours a night since he left. Our children (17 & 19) are beyond crushed by all of this. I had major surgery two weeks after he left so I'm also dealing with that. Needless to say, I fly off the handle pretty easy and take everything he says as a personal rejection.

Every time I see him, he always kisses me. He holds me tight and I say I love you and he replies "I know you do". When he calls to check on us or comes up to visit, he never stays or talks very long, he says "I've got to go". I'm am so screwed up because I get such mixed signals from him. He is still very much involved in his long distance relationship. We talked on Sunday and when he left he said, " So I either need to spend more time up here or cut all ties". I told him those were the choices. He called 3 times on Monday, 4 times on Tuesday and we met for coke after my counseling session (he has stopped going). Then today he pulled back again.

I need some help. Is this hopeless? Or am I too needy right now? I just want him to give our marriage one tenth of the energy he is giving his affair. I have already forgiven him. I am not totally innocent here. We have never fought because I cry and he said he can't deal with that so he never "aired" his issues. I should have realized that he wasn't happy. But this is ripping two families apart and they don't care.

MY REPLY:

Hi there Michelle,

Thanks for your email. What you are going through isn't all that uncommon. What your husband did in leaving isn't particularly uncommon for a man in his late fifties. Your children are all grown up and in his eyes he must imagine he has done his duty by his family. As hurt as you are feeling right now, you need to pull back and take responsibility for yourself, particularly your physical and mental health.

It sounds from your submission that you have had a lot to deal with, having come out of surgery as well as trying to support your children through this. But the most important thing that you need to do at this moment is take control of yourself and the situation you are in. You mention that you are sleeping only 4 hours a night since your husband left. Your body is simply unable to sustain that for an extended length of time. You need to develop ways to remove yourself from the situation and find ways to relax. I have a number of exercises in the book that cover ways to stay positive and let go of the feelings that are threatening to overwhelm you. My book, *Book 2: For Marriages in Extreme Crisis* has a range of exercises and useful material that will help.

You are responsible for yourself now, and that is something that is directly within your control. The situation that you have been thrown into is outside your influence, but how you choose to react to this situation is entirely within your control. You choose to let it affect you at the moment because you are overwhelmed with emotion. Finding ways to channel these feelings and learn from them is the next step.

You need to work on being a strong and confident person, the sort of person that your husband once loved. If you want to save your marriage you need to be the sort of person that is his equal. Your first priority is your sleep. The second priority is to channel your emotions and find effective ways to let your anger and frustration go. I have a number of exercises in my book that will help you with this. Rather than fighting what may happen, you need to focus your energies on what you can do to get him to come back.

I am pleased to hear that you are able to stay positive in your dealings with your husband, and this will make it easier for you and for him in the long run. You need to stop taking every comment he makes as a personal rejection. The sooner you are able to accept what may happen to you, and come to terms with the fact that you may split, the sooner you are able to invest your energies in making yourself a stronger and more confident person, and one that is easier to be around.

Once you are feeling stronger, you need to re-establish dialogue with him as an equal, and not as a wife asking for her husband to come back. You need to work on making each time he visits a positive one. You can't control his choice to leave, but if his interactions are more positive with you then his decision is more difficult.

Your lack of intimacy in your relationship is a huge issue that should never have been left for so long. This is another issue entirely however, so in the meantime I will leave it. You also mention that you never fought because you always cried. This is another issue that needs attention. Communication is paramount in successful marriages, and without a forum where each of you can express your feelings freely and without guilt, you are creating problems. Your emotional reaction to his expressions of opinion or feelings closed that gateway of communication.

In the meantime however, you need to focus on rebuilding your confidence and strength, both physically and emotionally before you are ready to save your marriage. Once you have done this you have communication and intimacy issues that are high on your list of priorities. These are your focuses.

Good luck



I do not want to make my story long but the result from last 7 years is, my marriage was empty, i felt lonely and alone and i had an affaire for last 3 1/2 years with a good friend (7 years younger)that we knew each other for last 6 years. I asked for divorce but my husband wants us to try this time he wants to learn how to change and fixed his problems. I have no feelings for him or desire but i feel guilty that he wants to and i should give a try since we are 15 years married and have two kids. He does not know about my life on the side. The other person became my best friend and lover. My husband knows he is my best friend for years now and our family did things like hiking, dinners, party and skiing together. Now for last year his wife left and he is single and wants to have a life and not want me to leave my husband for him. He lost belief in what is real and do not want me to break up marriage and then he might not be with me.

I am 40 years old and i thought i can never feel for someone what i fee for him. Is almost like my love for my kids, even when they hurt me i still put them first on front of me. i want for him all the best even if it hurts me. He want us to be friend, he is trying with other girls and i am having very hard time with this but can't walk away. Now i told my husband that i will try us to work with the therapists he found and i will try to learn how to love him and desire him. But can I learn, what should i do how is this possible, when i am so in love with the other man. it is possible to learn to love and want someone and be completely happy with someone when you do not feel nothing to that person anymore. my husband do not knows about my affair but he know that i am unhappy with him for years and that i lost all my feeling towards him. We did not have any contact sexual with each other for 2 years now. Can i be friend to the one I love and will the pain go away when i see him with other women, what to do to learn to love my husband and forget the only love in my life and my best friend.

I am looking for your suggestion, thank you,

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

The hardest thing about emotions is that they are not always logical, they don't always follow reason, and they don't always make your life any easier. But as illogical as your feelings may be, they are nonetheless still valid.

If you are serious about saving your marriage, you first need to put things in perspective. You have a husband and two children who have no knowledge of your affair, but still love you. Yes, it sounds as though your marriage has some issues that need to be dealt with, but what is the alternative?

The man you have been having an affair with wants to live a single life without the commitment and responsibility that comes with a relationship. He has already indicated to you that he is unwilling to have you leave your husband for him. You have built a picture inside your mind of how this man is, but as nice as that is, he is never going to offer you the type of relationship or life that you want with him. You fulfilled a role in his life, but as a lover, not a girlfriend or partner. It is unlikely that you will ever be more than that.

If you are going to give your marriage a chance, you need to cease all contact with this man. Friendship can only work if that is what you both want, and at this stage you want a lot more than he is prepared to give. Seeing him on any level is only going to make your life more difficult.

So how do you learn to love and want your husband? I would encourage you to have a look at Book 2: For Marriages in Extreme Crisis. This book is part of your package. Of particular interest to you would be Chapter 7: Love is a Doing Word, and Chapter 5: The Anatomy of an Affair.

Try doing small things for each other every day to let the other know that you are thinking of them. This could be as simple as buying their favorite chocolate bar, or making their coffee in the morning. Love is an act, and a good start is to try doing small things to demonstrate this love.

What role did this other man play in your life that your husband cannot fulfill? How can you make your husband fulfill this need in your life? Your husband knows that you are both in an unhappy marriage, and part of the healing process is to sit down as a couple and discuss how you can better fulfill each other's needs. Concentrate on making your husband your best friend again. You need to make this effort if your marriage is going to survive.

Good luck.



I have downloaded many ebooks on 'a starting point' to save my marriage and yours is the one I immediately associated with, thank you. My hubby has been married 3 times, this is my 1st and only! I am certain your book is going to be of help to me whether my marriage survives or not. As my situation isn't depicted in your book, I wondered if following your ideas would still be true?

My hubby has been accusing me of having affairs throughout our whole relationship. I have gone to great lengths to prove I have not, yet he still says I have no matter what truth is put before him. Yes he's told me he doesn't love me anymore and is making me make plans for divorce. In England you have to have proof of what you accuse. Out the two of us my husband has no proof of any affair, but I have proof of how he has treated me during these times and can divorce him on these grounds. I don't wish to divorce my husband. No matter what he has thrown at me I have taken. Yes I am hurt and angry and yes I show these feelings in front of my husband. What doesn't help matters is that I have Progressive MS. I often do not absorb conversation and I make requests for words to be repeated or something to be explained in another way so that I may grasp what is being said.

My husband often shows his irritation with me if he has to do this and tonight after starting on my making amends for our marriage he showed his irritation and yes I was cross back. To make matters worse I explained why I was cross and put forward that I saw no harm in simply asking my husband to explain something in a different manner so I could grasp his words. I feel I have taken 10 paces back. I am having great difficulty in reading your book and putting it into action when I have not ever had an affair. But in many areas of your book I do affiliate with tremendously and I have a lot to learn! I think what I am trying to do is ask 'do you think this book is for me?'. I want to save my marriage because I know it is worth it. No matter what my hubby has accused me of, my commitment and love for him remains. He hurts when he tells me that I don't love him and never have. He has told me that he no longer loves me recently. I feel very lost and empty because I can't quite grasp why any of this is happening especially when I know I have been faithful. So far, reading into your book I have tried to put myself in the position of someone whom has had an affair and I cannot associate the feelings that would come with doing such a thing. But I do know my hubby is feeling hurt and all that comes with being cheated on. No matter what I do I don't appear to be able to 'reach' him. He has distanced himself that much that he shows no emotion when talking of things that should mean something to him. He wants his divorce and that's it.



MY REPLY:

Hi there,

The Save Marriage package is designed for couples in all situations to get benefit from, and every couple can take something from the material and exercises that we lead you through.

It sounds as though your husband has a lot of anger and is projecting that anger at you. What you need to do as a couple is take a step back and look at the motivation for these attacks and why they happen. What is it that triggers his behaviors, and why do you think you are the target of his attacks? Is your disability difficult for him to deal with?

From what you have described, you are having conflicts over seemingly insignificant things such as miscommunications and misunderstandings. The two of you are fighting about immediate conflicts rather than the deeper issues that surround them.

Take a look at the fights and conflicts that you have had in the last month. Can you identify any patterns of behavior there?

You also need to look at why your husband thinks you are having an affair. What makes him think that, and in what way have you modified your behavior to set his mind at ease?

Behind every comment and accusation your husband makes, you need to look at his reasons for saying it. What is making him think and say these things? If your husband is feeling irritated or threatened, what are you doing to spark this?

I really do feel that this book is for you, but some individual counseling that your husband and you can go to separately might also be of benefit. Your husband and you both need to find appropriate ways to channel your anger and increase the communication between you. That will lessen the chance of further misunderstanding and conflict.

If you cannot control what your husband does, then you need to refocus your energies back into you. Make yourself a positive person to be around, and one that doesn't absorb his accusations and anger. It's not an easy thing to do, as false accusations hurt. But if you work on making yourself a better person, and show yourself and others that you can be a better person, you are better equipped to then start on addressing your marital problem. You first, then your marriage.

Good luck

Andrew



I like your book and I have been reading and doing the exercises. My husband and I are 81 years old and have been married almost 58 years. You are right no marriage is perfect we have certainly had our ups and downs. My husband began an affair about 15 years ago. After my asking that he stop seeing the woman, he continues. She is about 12 years younger than he. He has had prostate surgery, and began the affair just before the surgery. He has told me that sex is painful or an orgasm is painful. He has told me that he enjoys being in bed with me because it's comforting. Just recently I discovered that he had seen her. I told him I didn't want him in bed with me until he stopped seeing her. He said he wanted to take one day at a time. He has never said that he was sorry. Only lip service sorrow.

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Affairs are always horrible things, and more so for couples who have spent a lifetime together like yourself. When you reach your age the rules regarding what to do after an affair change a little. Your marriage is as much about your depending on each other and the familiarity and security of your long-term marriage as it is about love and physical expressions of this.

You need to create an environment where you are able to share your feelings regarding his infidelity with him and how this makes you feel. It is equally important that he is able to listen. Talk about how much you love your husband and how you have given your life for him and grown old together. Talk about all the shared experiences you have had together. Talk about how you feel as a person when you discovered his infidelity and how hurt you feel. Try and make him understand the hurt and the pain you are feeling. Also talk about the trust in your marriage that has been shattered by his need for fulfillment outside the marriage.

In what way does this woman fulfill your husband, and why does he feel the need to look outside the marriage for this type of fulfillment? What can you do to meet this need?

You are right to not want him in bed with you until he stops seeing her. You also need to insist that you both go to counseling to work through this issue. You need an explanation, and he needs to know how he makes you feel



I guess what I want to say is me and my wife are separated at the moment and I am going to counseling and she is not... I cheated a few years ago with her sister and it was just a brief encounter never to happen again... she just found out about it and it was like it was brand new for her... so a lot of other issues of neglect and resentment came out that she has never mentioned before... I want her back but she wants us to be apart... she says she is not against the idea of getting back together but it just has to happen... like if it's meant to be it will just happen... so she is not trying to work towards it... but I want to... things are going better for us and she had mentioned to my sister that she would like to miss me but I'm there a lot... because of our son that we share every other day... I need to get her to

miss me and think of good things and not bad... I know we have a chance im just not sure how to help things along in the right direction... please help me....

thank you for your time

MY REPLY:

I imagine when your wife discovered that you cheated with her sister it would evoke a reaction, no matter how long ago it was. For her to say she wants time apart would be an understatement, and you shouldn't be too surprised that she has reacted this way.

You need to consider what a betrayal it was for her, on several levels. The two people she should be able to trust the most, her husband and her family, have betrayed her deeply, and it is quite normal for your wife to feel anger and resentment.

You need to allow your wife the opportunity to have her anger, and her space and time to think clearly. There is a lot to think about, and a lot of feelings to process. Putting pressure on her isn't going to make her get through this process faster. You need to be patient and supportive.

Take a look at the chapter in Book 2 on "Love is a Doing Word". Find little ways to demonstrate your support and love for your wife without placing too much pressure on her. Give her some space where possible so she has the opportunity to miss you, perhaps for a few weeks, then see if you are able to arrange a time for the two of you to spend some time together, even if only for a cup of coffee to begin with. You need to slowly re-initiate contact with her, but only a little at a time.

Good luck



My girlfriend and I are now physically separated after a 4 yr relationship - 2.5 years sharing a house that we bought. We have treated the relationship like a marriage in every way.

I am 44 yrs old, she is 39. Both of us are professionals and previously divorced. She has a 10 yr old daughter to whom I've been the only "dad" she's ever known. The relationship never experienced so much as a raised voice during 4 yrs -- until Robin started to gradually withdraw over the last half of 2005. Claiming monthly depression and blues prior to her period, she didn't want to communicate her problems to me even though I asked. Eventually, she engaged in an affair with an older man. I believe that the affair was strictly emotional, and no sex occurred -- even though I believe sex was planned but thwarted by the other man's wife.

Apparently, "he" broke off the affair with Robin, but we now live under separate roofs. We have been separated for 7 weeks and are undergoing counseling jointly, but not more often than once every 4-6 wks -- yet, we are doing the individual counseling approximately once a week.

Even though I strongly desire to rectify our problems and reconcile the relationship, she has indicated that she needs space to regain her self-confidence, think about things, and grieve the loss of the other relationship. She has not broken-off our relationship, but said we need to get to know each other again. Officially, she is undecided about reconciliation. In response, I have decided to let her have her space and not push her to change her mind. We continue to have minimal contact.

Other than continuing to allow her the time she needs to work out her issues, what other strategies are available to rectify a relationship/marriage during a physical separation? What specific tips or strategies can you impart to help save this relationship that is enduring a physical separation?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

One of the first realizations I came to while reading your submission is that you cannot take responsibility for what happened in your relationship that led to your breakup or your partner's decision to have an affair. Withdrawal is something your partner did for one reason or another, and despite your concerns and asking her about it, she did not offer to share her feelings.

I feel I need to make this point before we look at the issues.

So in looking at what your partner's issues are, I can theorize that her decision to separate may be related to her depression or sense of apathy in her relationship of 4 years with you. People suffering from depression are really tortured souls, partly in the way they feel so empty, hollow, unhappy and unfulfilled, yet may not know the reason why. In this case she turned to another man in the belief that her relationship with you may have been the cause of her depression. It is unlikely that you are the reason, but it is often easier to focus on you than face up to the reality of her life being a result of the decisions that she has made.

At this stage it is in your best interests to be as supportive as possible, and respect her need for time out. I do think that you need to increase the joint counseling to once every two weeks, so that the work you go through is more relevant and measurable from session to session.

If she has indicated that she needs to get to know you again, you need to follow this up with an outline for suggested times in which you can do so, or it is unlikely to happen. Therapy is all fine and well, but unless the theories and issues raised are followed up with exercises and tasks, your progress is going to be limited. You need to discuss this idea with your counselor as well as with your partner with a view to increasing the frequency of couple counseling and increased contact with your partner in an effort to get to know one another again.

I would also encourage you to take a look at Chapter 7 of Book 2, "Love is a doing word". Loving your partner can be as simple as doing something very small. Buy your partner her favorite muffin when you have coffee together. Make her some soup or buy her favorite pack of coffee or teabags. Show your appreciation by saying "thank you" more often. Send her a favorite photo of the two of you together. Show your wife love in small acts and see if she reciprocates.



This is not an easy time for both of you. But the support and small acts of love you are able to offer her may be all she needs to help get her through this.

Hang in there.

Kind regards,

Andrew



My wife (44) and I (47) have been married for the past 19 years and we have two children aged 16 and 10. Last year around this time I came to know of my wife's affair with her work place colleague, a man 12 years older to her, whose present and past wives were wives of other men that he had to inherit when the affairs got exposed (She told me). When confronted, she denied, shouted me down, continued contact till he left this place for good the following month. She then admitted when I threatened to walk out on her. She wanted us to forget the past, start it all over again, and divert our minds on a new family project of buying a house. Honestly, I didn't want to leave her because I loved her and her affair was a rude shock for me. During her affair, for over one whole year, she treated me harshly, humiliated me, rejected me and distanced herself from me. I didn't understand her warped wisdom. She stopped the affair not because she wanted to or because of me but because the guy has gone and this hurts me. When I came to know about the whole story, all that I wanted to see in her was a feeling of guilt and remorse for her behavior towards me. I did what all offended spouses would do – begging, pleading, threatening, emotional and moral appeals, etc. but nothing worked. She apologized, assured fidelity only when threatened with a separation. Four times I tried but she didn't let me go. I stayed back hoping that she would relate with me in love and not in anger and arrogance. Ten months have passed and I still live with fear and anxiety, because she has still not taken the step to heal the relationship. There is no sexual contact between us and when it is there, say once a month, it is followed by three or four turbulent days. I often curse myself for not walking out ten months ago. Let me also briefly mention about her: She is a very lively person, charming, friendly, gregarious, talkative, some call her "live wire" and she has the ability to energize situations and gatherings. Please pardon me for my subjective view of her. Just as much as she is agile and friendly, she is always on short fuse, often loud and aggressive, pessimistic, impatient, frustrated, cannot take a 'no', can never say 'sorry', especially when things concern me. Even if she knows that she has wronged, she would never admit it but becomes extremely defensive and aggressive to cover up or even divert the attention on something else to fight about. We have always had tensions and fights between us because she has always been very angry, assertive and arrogant in her ways of dealing with me. But we have always managed to get back. I knew it was her nature and didn't mind putting up with that in view of the good things I got out of the relationship. But now, why should I? It seems hard.

I would like you know your mind on these following questions:

Why is she reluctant to own responsibility and to make me feel safe and loved?

Is healing and reconciliation possible in marital relationships without speaking the truth or without the offending spouse seeking forgiveness?

But in the absence of any proactive ways of healing reconciliation, do I infer that the affair is still not over?

How do I make her to make me feel safe? Any practical wisdom?

Is she plain arrogant that I can't expect anything more than this from her?

Is there any point in hanging on to this relationship?

MY REPLY:

Hi there,

Thanks for your email, and the detail and thought you have put into explaining your situation and your marital history. Affairs often cause a variety of different types of chaos, and for many couples it is an explosion of the myth of marital happiness, and for many more, it is a final result of many destructive forces and factors that have been at work.

Healing in a relationship requires a commitment by both people involved in the marriage. There is often the misconception that the guilty partner is the one that has all the work to do, but you need to consider that the outcome is one that you both share. Another factor is that both people share responsibility for what happened and therefore should share responsibility for the outcome. I'm not saying that you are responsible for the affair, but the marital context in which it was able to happen was something you did contribute to. Poor communication, an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, and allowing your wife's moods to dictate your marriage have all contributed on some level to the stage you are at.

In regard to your questions:

Your wife is reluctant to own responsibility because you let her get away with it. If your wife can never say sorry and becomes aggressive and you allow her to do this, the behavior becomes entrenched. When she becomes loud and aggressive, you need to tell her that communication is broken, and that you will cease communication until she is able to control herself. Unacceptable behavior needs to be met with a calm and structured approach, and a temporary separation may be necessary until she is able to make a commitment to healing the hurt in your relationship. Your need to feel safe and loved is your stuff to deal with. If you don't feel safe and loved in your relationship it is your responsibility to communicate this to her.

Healing and reconciliation is not possible without revisiting the wounds and hurt, healing it, and making a commitment to changing the negative patterns of behavior. To believe you can have reconciliation without the truth is kidding yourself and your partner.

Making her make you feel safe... How about going on a holiday together as a couple, allowing you the opportunity to escape your responsibilities to the children and others and reconnecting as a couple? This would allow you both the chance to identify what the purpose of each other's love is, and what you each hope to get out of a relationship. Identify what you need to have in your relationship to make it perfect. It should also give you a good indication if there is a marriage worth saving.

The affair is over, but the hurt is not healed. Without healing, your marriage is over, and if your wife is unwilling to make a commitment to heal then you may need to make arrangements for a separation.

It could be arrogance, or it could be a deeply entrenched wound in her past that prevents her from saying sorry or admitting guilt. I believe she needs some counseling or therapy to workshop this hurt and repressed anger out, so that she is able to heal herself before focusing on your marriage.

You need to communicate your feelings to her more clearly, and follow up your concerns with opportunities for review to assess your progress. Your decision to stay in the marriage has to be met with a commitment from her to work towards reconciliation and healing, preferably through individual, followed by couples counseling. A failure to do so should result in you choosing whether you prefer to stay or go.

I wish you luck.



Hello

I am at my wits end. Deep inside, somehow, I don't know how, I know there are answers but, as much as I look yet, I can't see them..

She is beautiful beyond compare both inside and out and I love her dearly. We have reached a plateau in our relationship that, according to her, we cannot get past. For her, this is the end and I am thunderstruck.

We had a series of arguments about two years ago that she has not forgotten. It was over an affair that I actually encouraged. I did so thinking that this would somehow improve her lack of self confidence in herself and in just being an attractive, sexy woman. She never believed she was you see? And, because I was having no effect what-so-ever, I encouraged this other man/lover. (He doesn't know I pushed her to him) But, it went just that bit too far. She was able to do things with him that she could not do with me and, of course, this struck home with me. He was easier to control - easier to play around with and, ultimately, his opinion of her really didn't enter into it. And so, naturally, it was easier to be with him than with me. Oh I felt that. The humiliation was often too much and I found myself living on my nerves most of the time. All the time they were seeing each other, I expected her to leave me anytime. In fact, he did offer to 'take her away from all this' and, sad to say, she was tempted. (Who wouldn't be?).

For her part, it must have been difficult. Since I had no control at all over my own insecurities, too often, I allowed them to speak and not me. The stupid thing is though, in hindsight, I do know that, if I had just left it alone, it would have fizzled out of its own accord. But, hindsight is no damn good to any of us is it? Not really. We need it now - not after don't we?

Luckily, (and thank God for that), we are still living together. We have a daughter and (thank God again) we love each other very much. Although I want to with all my being yet, I have backed off sexually but do give cuddles and kisses for no other reason than to just give them. I tell her she is beautiful for no reason and, because of this, so far, I have managed to bring this tumultuous shock to some kind of slow pause for now. What to do next I don't know.

Before I say anymore, I want to add that I take full responsibility for all my mistakes. I take responsibility for what has happened, is happening now or will happen between us in which I hold no grudge or ill will towards her. This is all my doing and, if only I had the eyes to see then none of this would have happened - not just for me but for her too. Everything I do today is based solely on the fact that we still love each other, still kiss and cuddle and that, somewhere inside her, I know she still needs to feel happy with me again. God only knows what I would do if these were not there. But, even if they were not yet, for the sake of our twenty year relationship, I would not give in to this. We are much too valuable for that.

In feeling her out (as you do), I do know that she is deeply angry with me. I also know she is not doing this purposely. She can't help her feelings no more than I can mine. This 'thing' in her soul is big and its going to take some moving.

There is an underlying faith in her towards me. I don't know how I know this but it is there and, for that too, I can't let her down yet again.

However, in now being able to concentrate solely on her and disregarding myself (I can wait to get myself right) I also now know, for a fact, that the anger is not mine alone as she believes it to be. Yes, she has a right to be angry with me for, I did say things that chipped away at both her and our relationship. This then forced her to defend herself and also become something she isn't. She got very abusive and physical in that time much more than I and this too, had its effect upon her. She didn't like the negative side of herself. But then, who does?

Can I say here that, because of my own insecurities at that time that I did not actually start rowing with her? Remember, I 'believed' that she would leave me any second and so, I knew that, if I started anything then she'd be out of the door. And so, I would say something, she would immediately defend herself, I would try to stay in control but she would insist on taking it further and so on. This is not to say \*at all\* that it is all her fault and not mine. I shouldn't have said \*anything\* you see? I should have re-evaluated my 'idea' of marriage guidance/ self awareness and improvement for women, got some lessons and shut the hell up! But, in being as stupid and as stubborn as I am, I knew best didn't I?

Ok. It's not just me. This anger is about her sexuality as a whole and how she has struggled with it since she was a teenager or even smaller. Like me, she too has emerged from a broken home and she is still angry about it. I'm not. My past is settled within me. But hers isn't. When she is effected emotionally then, her sexuality is the first to go out of the window. I honestly feel that, although she has concentrated on me and my wrongs back then yet I am not the entire problem.

If it was just about her anger with me and the fact that she cannot have sex (make love) with me then, why has she given up on herself? I mean, we may not feel like it at the time but, very few of us give up masturbating even in the hardest of times. Self love in this way is still important wouldn't you say? Ok. Not everyone will be the same of course but, she is a vivacious woman and a definite predator when



it comes to sex. She is not in the least attracted to any other man - which, in itself is very unusual. It just seems to me that, what I have done is to have opened up a can of worms that are now all over the place and that each worm is a reminder of why she \*isn't\* a beautiful, sexy and deeply attractive woman. (I mention this more than anything because this, to her, is THE all important thing to HER and not because I want it to be Ok? I just want her to be happy but, above all, to be \*herself\*. I love her no matter how she is wrapped).

This anger is unbelievably strong and, left to her, I am sure that we would not be together now but that she would be alone and even happy with this for a while. But it wont solve anything else other than to bolster this anger. ("I deserve to be alone. I am worthless - and I am happy about it"). If I thought it would help then, of course, I wouldn't be there now. But it wont. It will make it much harder.

In your book, it states that we can do this alone even if your partner doesn't yet, in your book the real crux of it is that we must work together.

Well, that's it for me because, if there is one thing she doesn't want to do now is \*work together\* for something she has already said goodbye too.

I bought this book on that statement alone. I know changes must be made. I

know that there must be something that I can do - other than what I am already doing - to help her to at least begin to let this anger go. To leave her with this anger wont cure her because, her life has been all about anger - the 'devil' she knows. There IS a better way. I know this but, without help, I can't get us there.

I am with her most of the time. I do things around the house, things that needed doing to generally bring back as best I can, this feeling of togetherness that we still have. Even if she doesn't see me as her man, her lover right now well, we have to start somewhere don't we?

Meantime, she doesn't want to work at it. She doesn't want to read about it. She doesn't want counseling. She is waiting for me to come up with an answer even though she believes there isn't one. She doesn't know I have bought this book. If she did then, to her, \*I\* have no answers see? Thus, why fight it? Leave!

You know, I just cannot believe that she would let us go like this. I cannot believe that she would forget all the good and remember only the bad. She remembers the tyrant but never her giant in and out of bed. She as completely forgotten all the good things I have said to her over those 20 years and remembered the FEW bad things I have said. Of course I can visit our daughter anytime I like. That has never been questioned. But, dear lord, besides fighting myself and MY needs, wants and desires all day long (and masturbating 'til the cows come home so I don't come across as desperate but rather HER strong man!), I just sit there, quietly being with her (because it is healing for us both to do this) whilst I hope and pray that some miracle will happen that will help her see that ANY anger can be overcome ANY time we like.

Miracles DO happen and they happen ALL the time. Indeed, even couples who have lost their love can still find this love again even after twenty odd years of cold separation. It happens! It happens OFTEN.

Why is it that, when we're angry that we feel that we're going to be angry ALL our lives? Is it just me or do all women 'believe' this? ANY anger can be beaten - it is beaten by being accepted, understood and then allowed to go its own way.

Whilst she feels like this - which could go on for some time yet, I dare not approach this subject. I have to give her time to seethe inwardly in her own way or I am for it you see? (Don't worry. I won't be rowing again - not if it means that she'll remember it two years later for God's sake! I'll buy boxing gloves and beat the crap out of the postman instead!).

She *should* let it go. I know this. I have shown her that I really do understand, it was all my fault and that she is completely blameless. I was insecure and I spoke and acted like a boy right at the time she needed a man. I failed us both. But, I am not paying for that for the rest of my life. I have learned from it and appreciate it for the lesson it is and so, I have moved on from that. She's not ready to move anywhere yet.

There IS an answer for me. Miracles DO happen. Why not for us too?

MY REPLY:

Hi,

What I will say here is WOW that was a huge email detailing how you are feeling about what has happened in your marriage and where you feel it is falling down. You are quite right in identifying that you can't change what happened in the past, so I'm not going to go there.

Where you need to focus is on your present and future, and how your wife is going to join you in your destiny or you are going to do it alone. She has anger, frustration, apathy, and a whole host of negative emotions, and she is looking to you to fix it for her.

Simply, that's crap. These issues are her stuff, and if she wants answers, it is her responsibility to make some commitment towards healing some of her hurt. You can be her support, but you can't do it all for her.

Her focus is on her anger and all the bad things that have happened in her marriage. Equally, there are as many happy memories and good times in your marriage but it suits her to see it differently. It is all about perspective, and your wife is stuck in a rut of seeing it all in a negative light.

Tell her you will always be her friend. Tell her you will always be here for her. Tell her you have had the best years of your life with her by your side. But also tell her that marriage is a partnership. Tell her that it is an emotional investment from both parties, and that you cannot continue to do it alone. Tell her that you are not responsible for her happiness. That is her reality to create.

More than anything, she needs counseling to determine how she is going to heal herself and her pain. If she doesn't want to do it, back off and stop trying. The harder you try, the more pain you will both feel.

If you have done as much as you can, stop doing it. Back away. It is her turn to heal herself now.



I have 2 questions that maybe you can help me with:

1) My wife had an "email affair" and a "text message affair" that I discovered fairly quickly and put an end to. She is of the belief that since she never actually slept with these 2 guys that it's no big deal and didn't mean anything, but I saw the text of them and it was overly flirtatious to put it mildly (the text messaging was actually graphic sexual messages for a week or so before I found it). How can I get her to understand the seriousness of what she was doing and how it was the beginning of a much larger real affair and was not o.k. just because there was no physical contact?

2) My wife has never had to work because her father made a lot of money. He has passed away and I have never forced her to work yet she wants me to spend irrationally for instance \$1200/month on going out to dinner that I think we could spend on better things. How can I get her to appreciate the value of a dollar and that you need to be aware of what/how you spend?

Maybe you can help me to explain these things in a way that will get through to her, because I have been unsuccessful myself so far.

Thank You,

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

Affairs online or through text can be just as damaging as an actual affair because of the emotional aspect of the affair, even if there is no physical contact. Sending emails and texts in a graphical sexual manner to a stranger can indicate that something is seriously amiss with the person involved and their commitment to the relationship. The question would follow why you cannot fulfill this desire or need within the relationship, so if your wife has shared her feelings or desires with another then you would feel betrayed or let down.

Perhaps the way you need to approach this is in the way you were made to feel. Rather than focusing on it being a larger real affair, you need to communicate to your wife how you felt when this happened and how you felt betrayed that she needed to look outside the relationship for sexual or emotional fulfillment.

What led her to send these emails to these other guys and not you? In what way did she feel that she couldn't share these feelings with you? What did she hope to achieve from sending these emails to other men? How did she imagine you would feel when you found out?

The fact that she kept it a secret from you is an indication that it was not okay. It was a secret because she knew she shouldn't be doing it. It was a secret because she knew it would harm your relationship.

Communicate your feelings to her rather than trying to link it to the possibility of a real affair. She may not have had physical contact but the feelings you are feeling are real. She needs to understand this, and it is your job to communicate this to her.

Regarding the spending of money, perhaps you need to identify what each of you contribute to the relationship and how each of you have input into how the money is spent. You need to sit down as a couple and prepare a budget, and identify how much money is coming in a month and where it is going to be spent. Write down your goals as a couple, and how your finances are going to help you reach your goals.

It is all about compromise and finding some middle ground. Perhaps you could spend \$600 on dinner or things she likes, and the other \$600 on doing things you like. That way the both of you can have some input into how your finances are managed. In this way you both have some input into how you reach your financial and marital goals.



Dear Save My Marriage Today Team:

We have been married for 12 years. We don't have kids by mutual choice. Three weeks ago my husband confessed that he has been unfaithful for the past three years and is now involved with another woman. He is however not sure if this is the woman for him. To understand himself better and to find out if he wants to come back to me, he has moved out of the house and asked me not to keep in touch with him. I know that he is in touch with the other woman. And he has not set a time-line for this temporary separation. I love my husband dearly and despite all that has happened, I want to start afresh again. What do I do? Do I wait for him? Do I prepare myself for a life alone?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your submission. Finding out about infidelity is a huge shock for anyone, and to be faced with a three year affair after being married for 12 years would come as a life-changing revelation. However, I was alarmed to read that your husband is the one who has decided to move out and "find out" if he wants to come back to you. That is not his decision to make. This is something that both of you make as a couple after understanding the affair, the motivations for it, and rebuilding a new relationship.

If your husband is the type of man who believes that shifting out and severing contact is the way to "find out" what he wants he is mistaken. He simply wants the opportunity to figure out which of you he wants more. If you are happy to settle for that and await his decision, then you are handing all of the power to him. You need to establish what the objectives of the separation are.

- What does he hope to discover?
- What boundaries are being set regarding sex, contact, and other domestic arrangements?
- How long is the separation going to be for?
- How is ceasing contact going to help the temporary separation process?
- What is the framework for counseling and rebuilding the relationship?
- Has he ended the affair?
- Has he even apologized for the affair?



I understand that you still love your husband dearly, and these feelings of love will not simply go away. But you also need to take some control of the situation and establish how your temporary separation is going to bring you together, or if it is simply delaying the inevitable.

Concentrate on doing things that help you deal with this process, but at this stage you need to face the reality of living the rest of your life without him. The sooner you are able to do this, the less you will fear.



I just bought your books and have read them and I am enthusiastic to know that there is hope. But at the same time I have my doubts and as you are the expert and have seen many many cases, I have to ask you:

Do you think a persistent cheater can change? I am very sad that my husband is one of those. 16 years ago he cheated on me and we were separated for 6 months until he came back and told me he ended that relationship. I believed him. Then, 10 years ago he started to work in another town and practically lived there from Tuesday or Wednesday through Saturday. During that time I of course felt lonely and it was an argument we discussed for: I wanted him to come back, but he always had an excuse to remain there. I didn't suspect he was cheating on me as I really forgave him and didn't want to live the bad experience again. Also, he was loving and we had good sex and it seemed he was telling the truth. But 8 months ago I found out he was cheating again, but he said he wasn't. When I knew, I didn't speak with him for 1 month as I was really frustrated to know this. Then, I don't know why, I told him I didn't want to be like that and confronted him. Of course he denied everything, and said he was not cheating. Then I said, "Well, I'll go with you to see what are you doing there" Then he said everything, but didn't confess who she was. When I went to the place he works (is an own business) I found a picture of our 2 teens and me under the bed!!! He was hiding us. So he confessed everything, he was with a coworker who is a single mom of 2 girls. I asked him if the little girl was his and until today he assures me she is not. But the thing is that I have been telling him that I want to take this situation as an opportunity to become a real marriage, to live together again, that our relationship is important, etc. etc. But lately he told me that he has been cheating on me almost all our married life, since our first year, that with the woman I knew about 16 years ago he had a 9 year relationship!!!! (Can you imagine my eyes when he told me that??) And that he ended it because she wanted to have a baby and that he would never give half siblings to our kids.... (Hello???)

Then he had another casual romance in that town and that lately he knew this woman and has been together since September 2004. Well, he has been very sincere and impolite, don't you think? During these 8 months he has announced he will leave us about 3 times but he never does. When in June I asked him to leave, he said he didn't want to do so, that I had to be patient to let everything to return to the right place. Well, he accepted a big job there and now is finishing it and said we will come back then. But now I found out he is a member of AdultFinder.com and he is looking for "adventurous women who want to have discreet relations".

His attitude, his unrepentant nature, his sincere way of telling me the facts, all give me the feeling he will never change. But, in the other side of the coin, I really want to believe that a miracle can occur (I have search for an answer and became closer to God, and he promises that if I believe, nothing is impossible for Him). In the Bible, God tells us that he can change my husband's heart and I am now in his hands. But in the meantime, psychologically talking, what is your advice. How should I handle the situation in order to let him UNDERSTAND I don't want to remain in this situation as it is unnatural and unhealthy?

Thank you for writing those books, I love that one of your advices is PRAY. I will be waiting for your reply. Thank you in advance.

MY REPLY:

I am a strong believer in the power of prayer, and every night I pray for wisdom and guidance in my understanding of what it takes to do the right thing. I believe this is something you can do too, and taking time each day to think about what the right thing to do is a good exercise to put things in perspective. I would try journaling thoughts or keeping a diary of things that are going on in your marriage, issues that you feel need to be dealt with, emotions you feel in reaction to the situations you find yourself in, and things like that.

What this idea of writing thoughts down does is helps you identify and clarify your responses and your feelings regarding your husband's infidelity. You also might like to scale your feelings each day from one to ten, so that you are better able to understand the strength of your feelings and emotions and identify which things in particular trigger stronger responses than others.

I believe that there is hope in your marriage, but you are going to need more than just faith. You are going to need to empower yourself to use your crisis as a learning experience. I strongly believe your husband needs counseling, and suspect he may have a sexual addiction. These things are more common than you might believe. If your husband does still want to be in the marriage you need to know the reasons why, and what motivates him to want to stay. If he has persistently cheated on you all your married life I believe he is addicted to the idea of romantic love, rather than emotional attachments to these women.

As a couple you need to identify what his motivations for staying in the marriage are, and what motivates him to have affairs. What emotional fulfillment does he receive from affairs that he is not able to receive from his marriage?

To break the cycle of affairs you may need to make some significant life changes. The first thing is that your husband ceases all contact with the woman he has been having the affair with. He may need to change jobs, and you may need to face the idea of relocating so that you live in the same town that he works in. You are going to need to do whatever is necessary to break the cycle that has led him to cheat on you.

You are dealing with a serial cheater here, and unless the two of you are able to use this as a learning experience and make some significant life changes, there are no guarantees it won't happen again. But if your husband is committed to staying in the marriage you have every chance of understanding his infidelity and making positive changes to bring you both closer together.

You don't need to know all the details, in fact, it is better that you don't. But you do need to understand the idea of romantic love, lust, illicit sex and understand why it is so addictive to your husband. Then you both need to make a commitment to heal, change, and move forward.

The first step is in counseling, either individual or as a couple. Remember, your future is in building a new relationship with your husband, rather than picking up where you left off. It's as if you are starting a new relationship with him again, and this is an opportunity to put into practice the things you have learned and do things better this time.

This is an opportunity for growth for the both of you. I wish you the best of luck.



My marriage is in extreme crisis. I need your advice.

To be clear, I committed adultery 3 years ago. The secret sin lasted around 8 months or so. Over the next two years, there remained some email communication (I attempted to break the connection twice, but the woman was persistent and caught me in moments of weakness). My wife's anger really surfaced just a few months ago.

What a fool I've been. We have two kids, 15 & 12.

My wife started divorce proceedings in late August.

I have used many of the tips in your book with limited success. She is wanting to speed up the process so that we could be divorced right around Christmas. I feel as though there is another man in the picture based on how fast she wants to go, and the jealous emotions are difficult to deal with.

Should I just give her what she wants, or should I continue to buy time?

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

You missed one crucial detail. When did your wife find out about the affair, and how did she find out?

At this stage your wife is angry, and this is a healthy response. You need to realize at this stage in the process that you cannot control her reaction to this, but you can control your reaction to what she does. I would not encourage you to put pressure on her to take you back at this stage, as the harder you fight for this the harder she will fight you.

It is important that you and your wife are able to keep the lines of communication open for the sake of your children, and that the transition process is understood by both of you. You don't have to agree with the divorce but you do need to support your wife's right to being angry.

It is unlikely that a divorce is going to offer your wife the closure she is seeking. As father of your two children, you are always going to be part of her life in some capacity. This is something that she is going to need to realize in time.

My advice here would be to support your wife with love. Accept your responsibility for what happened, and support her in her decision. If you are able to respond to her with love, there is a better chance that you can remain friends on some level.

Her focus at the moment is on her anger and all the bad things that have happened in her marriage. There are as many happy memories and good times in your marriage but it suits her to see it differently. It is all about perspective, and your wife is stuck in a rut of seeing it all in a negative light. This time will pass.

Tell her you will always be her friend. Tell her you will always be here for her. Tell her you have had the best years of your life with her by your side. Tell her you will always be her friend even if she doesn't want to be yours.

In responding with love, you set an example for your children that mistakes do happen, but that it is possible to still do the right thing. You may not be able to be a husband anymore, but you will always be a friend and a father. This may be your new focus.



Me and my husband have been through a lot and to me it seems as though we have been through as much as a couple that have been together for 10+ years can handle. Now it has gotten really bad and i am in need of so much help and understanding. What am I doing wrong and what am I doing right, if anything? I hope that you can help along with your products that i have just ordered. Well lets see, where to start. My husband Robert and I got together on Dec 3rd of 2003 and then we got married on Sept. 25th of 2004 and everything was perfect until the spring of 2005 when everything started to go downhill. Part of it started when i found out that Robert had not got complete closure over his ex-wife whom he was with for 10 years. He was still carrying all of that with him along with trying to love me 100%. Then after i found out about all of that i started to get a little controlling of him, asking him where he was going, when he would leave the house. or who he was talking to on the phone, when i was either at work out with family or friends or even asleep. At that time he was not sleeping that much during the night. Finally it had ended up that in Aug of 2005 he had come home from a night out and told me that he did not love me like a wife anymore and that he loved me like a family member and thought that we should separate. I was extremely upset and hurt so i went to the coast with my father. When i got back Robert told me that he wanted me to move out so he could figure things out and i thought that maybe it would help. So I did and i was in my own place for about 3 months and he would call and come around once in awhile. It was hard. Then one of his friends came to me and told me that he was cheating on me and that he did not want to be with me anymore. I did not believe this friend of Robert's, so i did some research and i found out that he was with another woman and hanging out with her a lot. But it was not just her, it was her and her whole family (kids and her ex-husband). Anyways I was still hurt over all of it so i ended up coming home from work one day and Robert was not



at his house. I went over to her place and he was there. I tried calling and he would not answer so i got really upset and angry and left. About an hour later my phone rang and he was highly pissed at me for following him and he had said a lot of hurtful things, just about everything a man could say to a women that would be hurtful, and then he told me he was leaving out of state. I got scared and rushed over to his house and was on my hands and knees begging him to not go. Well he stayed and then he moved in with me for about a month and then asked me to come home so i did in Dec. of 2005 and everything was going good so i thought then Jan of 2006 came around and he told me he was going to Florida to see his ex-wife for the closure and i was not happy but i was willing to do whatever it would take to save my marriage well he went for about a day and a half came back and as i thought everything went wrong again he got off of the plane and told me he was leaving me for her had me move out again. So I left and we talked on the phone a week went by and he asked me to come over to his house so we could talk so i did and he told me that he slept with her. There i was again hurt.

About 3 days went by and he called me up again saying on how much of a fool he was and that he wanted me to come home so i let him. This was in Feb. 2006 then in April of 2006 he told me he was leaving again for 2 weeks this time to go back to Florida as they did not get anything accomplished the first time and through out all of this he had been telling me to go out and have some fun with some friends male or female and that he did not care and i needed it and i said no, but when he left the 2nd time i did go out with a male friend and had a drink. Why i was out Robert had called me and i did not answer finally when i left he called again and i answered and he asked me what i had been doing and at first i told him nothing but after a few moments i told him and he got upset just as i thought he would and he hung up on me. When i got him back on the phone we talked and he said he was coming home a week early i was very happy to hear that and i asked why and he said that it was because of me and that he wanted things to be better and new and he broke down in tears over the phone. When he came home he grabbed me like it had been years since we had seen each other it was so nice and at that time i really thought that everything was going to be ok but what i did not realize was the fact that i had been damaged from everything that had happen in the past year. So in Sept. 2006 I went on vacation with my family to the coast because i did not believe in him or myself that things would be ok i thought that they were just going to be the same and i wanted to get away to think things through. I made a mistake because while i was gone i was very hurt, always being away from him, but i was also very mean and cruel to him when he was trying to make everything better. I did not listen when i should have. He would call and i would talk to him but i would make it very short and he would be upset and crying and i acted like i did not care. There were times when i would not even tell him that i love him. I would just say i did not know. Then i did even more damage when i did something that i knew i should not have done. No, i did not cheat but pretty much the same thing. I was taking drugs behind his back and did not tell him about it because i just wanted the pain that he had caused to go away. I thought that that would help. I was wrong. Then i let my family get involved and i did not stand up at all for him. I just let them badger him and i did not say anything. I then came back for a bout an 1 1/2 hour and Jim had the house perfect candles the works and he was then on hands and knees begging me not to leave but i did and i destroyed him and i did not once tell him that i thought that everything was going to be ok and that i still loved him witch i did i was just scared to let him know because of all the hurtful things he had done to me. Yes i know 2 wrongs don't make a right and that is where i messed up. And now that is why i am so hoping that you can help me fix what i have broken because he tells me that he still loves me and wants to be with me but is not sure if he will be able to trust that i will not do that again. I love him so much that i would never do what i did to him ever again on my life this man is my world and i need your help to fix the damage that i have caused him because he is my world and I love Jim with all that I have in me and i wish that i could turn the clocks back but i cant. So please help me save my

marriage that means the world to me because I love my husband and i do want to spend the rest of my life with him.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

You are going through changes in your relationship that I don't believe either of you understand. The two-year point in a relationship is a crucial one, as it is around this time that the honeymoon phase of the relationship often ends and neither partner knows what to do about it.

The first stage you go through is infatuation and lust, and this progresses to romantic love. The romantic love period of the relationship can last anywhere from 6 months to 2 years, and following on from this period is a stage we call chaos. This is when you realize your partner is not perfect, and for the first time in your relationship you may disagree with them. This may be the first conflict. What defines this stage of the relationship is how the two of you choose to react to this conflict. If you choose to get through this and learn from it, the relationship can flourish. However if you choose to ignore it, you have the situation you are in now.

Your husband was motivated to revisit his previous relationship because he didn't understand what was happening in your relationship. He had the image of love being only romantic love, and when this changed it led him to question whether he still loved you or not. He did, but it is a different type of love: real love. Real love is when you realize your partner is not perfect, but you still love them. You love them for their differences rather than in spite of them. However the trap people fall into with marriage is that real love does require maintenance. Every day we are called to find new ways of loving our partner and expressing this love as we grow in love and understanding together. If you neglect the need to maintain your love, it becomes easy to fall into habits, perhaps take each other for granted, and one day wake up and find your relationship isn't at all what you had imagined it would be.

This was never about him rejecting you, as much as you felt it might have been. This was about your husband not understanding the many different stages of love.

This is where the situation started, and it looks like it has become a bit of a charade since then. The irony here is that both of you have hurt the very people you love the most: each other. This is something that is typical in love, but still something I will never understand.

Your situation has been worsened by poor communication and game playing, and if you are going to make any progress, it needs to stop. As it stands, your husband does still love you, but does not have complete trust in you. This is because of what you did in reaction to the pain you were feeling at your supposed rejection.

If you are looking for a way forward out of this, you first need to understand what you have been through and why love changes from one stage to another. I want you to read Susan Jeffers' book, "*Lasting Love*."

I would also encourage you to read through the e-books and do some of the exercises. Find ways to relax and process what is going on around you. At this time, clarity of mind is essential. Do the

exercises. Apply the concepts. Give yourself some time to understand what is going on and to question at every stage what you can do to turn this around. You may not always be able to control what your husband is doing, but you can control your reactions to it.

Be his friend. Love him. Find ways to love him. Love is a doing word, so find ways to demonstrate your love for your husband and show him that you are worthy of his trust and want to turn your marriage around.

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I need help really bad. I read all the books but I don't see my situation. I have been married 4 years. I have lied, been unfaithful and the latest is that I started to do adult webcam hosting online behind his back. I totally defiled my marriage but I have committed myself to God and want him back now. He says he doesn't love me anymore that he only sees me as a prostitute, a liar and a cheat. We've had major financial issues mostly my fault. I just need one more chance. He won't even sleep with me or want me to do anything for him. And he says that the only reason i am in the house is because I don't have a job. He says I sicken him and he can't wait until he does see my face anymore. Please what can I do now to show him I have changed! How can I get him to be intimate with me again and give us another chance? We started counseling but I was still hiding the webcam work till he caught me in the act last Friday. Now he doesn't want counseling and he doesn't want me. What to do? Please help I know he loves me. I just know it. And I have changed.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The issue that is hampering your marriage success is the breach of trust in your relationship caused by your lying, cheating, and deception. I understand that you believe that you have changed, however your actions tell your husband otherwise. You admitted that as recently as last Friday you were caught with your adult webcam hosting. This tells him very clearly that you have not changed, and worse than that, you continued the deception.

You need to understand that your husband has every right to be angry. Your actions contradict your promises to him that you have changed, and have given him every reason to stop the counseling process.

How do you show him you have changed? Start by being honest with yourself. You haven't changed. I want you to take a look at yourself:

What motivates you to lie? What motivates you to be unfaithful? What need within yourself is not being fulfilled by your relationship? Why do you feel motivated to go outside your marriage for this fulfillment? Why do you love your partner? Is it familiarity? Is it financial security? Is it the security of knowing he loves you? How do you show love to your partner? How do you feel your actions add to this feeling of love?

Once you are able to do some self-examination and examine what motivates your actions, I want you to consider your husband:

How do you expect him to react to you? What do you feel is a healthy reaction? How many chances do you believe he should give you? How many chances would you give if you were in his position? Why should he believe you have changed when you have proven to him that you haven't? What is going to be different this time?

Consider your history. When you tell him you have changed, can he relate this to a time in your past when you promised to change and did so? In what way in the past have you shown him how much you value him and your relationship?

If you are serious about saving your relationship, you need to go to counseling on your own for a while. Understand the hurt you have caused your husband and understand why forgiveness and trust take a long time to rebuild. Change because you want to change, not because you think it is what you have to do to save your marriage. Do it because you want to be a better person and a better wife, not simply to please him or stop him from leaving you.

Your actions speak louder than words.

HER REPLY:

Thank you, I guess because I have forgiven him I expect to be forgiven. He has verbally and physically abused me on many occasions until his change finally came. I stood by his side against all family advice. Now when it's my time for a big change he is ready to walk out the door. I have changed, because I received the strength of God since my last episode which was actually December 29. Love suffers long and is kind, love is not self seeking is not provoked, bears all believes all hopes all love never fails. I am learning this love I've got a lot of work but I just want us to work it out together. He's critical, judgmental and harbors unforgiveness. But I love him not for no other reason but that I choose to love him. At this point I can only just let go since it seems that he's not willing to try. I just hoped we would make it because we've been through a lot and I know he loves me underneath all the mess. Thanks again.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

When you tell me that you expect to be forgiven because you forgave him, this tells me that you never fully came to terms with what he did to you. Your husband made mistakes in the past, and by the sound of it they were serious mistakes, but for one reason or another you decided to forgive and you both made a commitment to move on and grow in your commitment and love. The fact that he made mistakes in the past does not excuse what you did.

Examine your motivations. Did you lie and cheat because you wanted to get him back? Did you do it because you wanted to hurt him? Did you do it because you knew you would get a second chance like you gave him? Did you love the person you were cheating with?



If you love each other, why do you both feel the need to hurt and betray each other? Love does not motivate you to cheat. Selfishness does. When you committed to love each other again and you forgave him, you put the past behind you. What he did to you has no relevance. This is about you and taking responsibility for your actions.

At this point you need to choose to love him despite the fact that he no longer trusts you. Love is not possession. Love is about knowing when to let go and stop hurting each other. You cannot control what he does at this point, but you can control how you choose to react to him. If he has to find time for forgiveness on his own, it is important that he knows you are there to support him when he needs it. Focus less on being his wife, and focus on being his friend.



I am currently 35 weeks pregnant and I found out just 3 weeks ago that my boyfriend of three yrs has been having an 11 month affair. He tried to cut it off with her after a couple months but she came back 5 months later and said she could be pregnant with his child. She gave birth on Jan 1st and it looks like its his. He has come to me and said that he was sorry and he loves me and wants to work it out. I am having a really hard time dealing with him going and seeing her and this child and she phones him every day and wants him to come. He try's to put her off but he doesn't want to neglect the child, he swears he will not deal with her sexually again. However every time he talks to her we get into a fight because it feels like he's still cheating. Do you have any ideas on how we can work this out? I am in a severe depression and I am worried that it could be affecting my unborn child. I've asked him to stop seeing her but how can he do that when there is a baby involved?

Please help.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

When a partner cheats and a child is created, there is always going to be a very tangible reminder of his infidelity in your life. This may be one of the biggest tests in your relationship, and you need to consider a few points very carefully.

The first is whether you and your husband still feel you are committed to the relationship, and whether you both still want to be in the marriage.

Do you still want to be married to him?

The next point I want you to consider is why your husband is still with you. In times of crisis like this, it is often easier to run away from your problems rather than face them. The fact that he has decided to face up to his problems indicates that he is taking the more difficult path, so at this stage you need to consider what is motivating him to do this. I also want you to consider the fact that he has decided to commit to you. It would have been very easy for him to have left the marriage, so if he has decided to stay this is indicative of his commitment to both you and the child you are carrying.

Regarding your husband staying in contact with this woman and her child, if he really is the father then he is going to fulfill his duty to the child. If this is a problem to you, you need to consider what your motivations are in feeling this way. If you still do not trust him or his commitment to you and the marriage, then this is a problem.

Do you want him back because you want to give it another go, or is it simply because it is easier with him rather than without him.

I understand that he has destroyed your trust, and that the child he has fathered to the other woman is going to be very difficult to come to terms with. But the fact that he hasn't left you and has faced up to his infidelity and obligations as a father are something you need to give him credit for. You may not understand why he is still in the marriage with you, but you need to respect him for the fact that he is.

You can't ask him to stop seeing her. As the father of her child, he has an obligation to that child, not to her. This is what you need to focus on. If he was happy to abandon his responsibilities to his child, what sort of person would that make him? Is this the sort of man you would want to share your life with?

I understand that he has had an affair and hurt you immeasurably. However he is facing up to his mistakes and his obligations as a father. He has also indicated his commitment very clearly to you and your marriage. You need to now decide if you are able to trust him and try again. It will be difficult, but without trust or faith in him, this isn't going to work.



My wife had a emotional affair with a guy from work. Then she proceeded to take it to the next level and started a physical relationship with this person. She is now in love with him and is having a hard time.

She wants to try to work on our marriage and see if she can make it work with us for our 2 year old daughter and for what we once have had.

Now she had broke it off with here lover 8 to 9 weeks ago and told her lover that they could not contact each other. But last night he sent here a text message and this is causing more problems between the 2 of us and more confusions on here part and as I feel it is not showing any respect for here wishes for them not to contact each other. The other problem I have is that she regrets what she has done to me and her lover's wife but not remorse or regrets for here affair and I can't understand this.

Is this normal for her to feel like this or is there some other underlying issue that might be going on here?? I need some help since I just fired my therapist and don't have anyone to talk to at this point.

Please help me

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

If your wife is serious about seeing if she can make it work, there are a few things that are not negotiable. The first is that she has to cease all contact with her lover. This may involve her changing jobs and may even involve shifting towns, but if you are going to give your marriage every chance of success, the very least she is going to have to do is change jobs.

At this stage you need to be blunt. Your marriage is more important than her job, and it has to be a priority. If she is unwilling to leave her job and seek employment elsewhere, this tells you very clearly that she is not as committed as she needs to be.

Your other comments about her regrets concern me. She regrets what she has done to you and her lover's wife, but she hasn't fully understood the impact of what the affair has done to her. This is a process that will be assisted through counseling. You need to exercise some patience here. If she fully regretted every aspect of her affair there would be little for her or you to learn through counseling. The function of counseling is to examine the motivations and paths that led to the decisions being made, and to see if these patterns of decisions and patterns of behavior can be changed.

She must cease all contact with her lover. Then you need to revisit counseling in order to both understand the implications of her affair.



Hi,

I have one major issue in my situation that after reading all your books appears to be a complete show-stopper. That is the fact that my wife says she has already given up hope and has made her mind up she wants us to separate and to move on.

Throughout your literature, there is reference to the fact that in order for a marriage in crisis to be saved, both parties must have at least some desire for that to happen.

Unfortunately, I appear to be totally on my own in my goal to try to save a marriage that I believe with all my heart can and will work.

Not promising, eh? ....

Our history is (as ever, I'm sure) extremely complicated but I will try to be as brief as possible.

I am 42 and my wife is 44. We were married 14 years ago after a courtship of about 2 years during most of which, we lived together. We have three girls, one of 13 and twins of 9.

Our early years were a little unorthodox and this has undoubtedly contributed to issues we have had since. Indeed, the family environments in which we were both raised were extra-ordinary as well and these have also had a significant effect. I can provide details if it will help but it will take a while and current counseling sessions we are having (see below) have brought many of these into the open.

My wife had an affair about 6 years ago following what she described as intense and prolonged unhappiness within our marriage. Although at the time she blamed me totally for driving her towards this affair, I think that recently she has recognized, at least partially, her role in the unhappiness.

This affair was extremely "heavy" for her and not purely physical. It lasted for approximately 8 months and although I knew it was happening from the early stages, I could not (or perhaps did not want to) prove it. Towards the end they had both decided to leave their spouses and live together - even putting a deposit down on new rented accommodation. However, the way it came out into the open was not the way they had planned; the other man panicked, told his wife and the whole thing ended really abruptly - much to my wife's anger and feeling of betrayal. Clearly some complex emotions here ... but she and I openly discussed these feelings at the time and this helped both of us (to varying degrees) come to terms with what happened.

We then had the opportunity to move abroad for a few years and we took that. This helped us rebuild (I maybe over-simplifying a little) and things were generally good for a few months.

I don't want to go into specifics but there is one thing that happened about the time we moved that despite an improvement in our marriage, I feel did begin to have a significant impact on our relationship. One of the conditions for us getting back together after the affair was that my wife insisted that I have a vasectomy. The timing was such that the operation was planned for approximately 2 months after the affair ended. My wife is in the medical profession but when I showed caution to agreeing to this at that time, she said that me not agreeing would be the most selfish thing she could imagine.

I had the snip and almost immediately after the operation, she went into a particular phase of her "grieving process" (her words) after losing her lover and shut up shop on the love-making front. Despite the occasional "one off", this lasted for months and you can imagine my emotions during this time. Our sex life (which although having had it's moments was never consistently "out of this world") has never really recovered since. She wouldn't talk and just kept saying "give me time". (I should point out that we have had moments of good sex since but these have been few and far between.)

Then, about 4 months after our move, I had a bout of depression during a stressful period at work and started drinking really heavily (this was by no means the first time - I had been a fairly heavy drinker for years).

Despite ups as well as downs, in general things got gradually worse over the 2.5 years we were away but we returned to the UK about 2.5 years ago and virtually started a new life here. We continued to "bumble along" - me still drinking heavily. Last summer (August) we had a disastrous family vacation in Europe - mainly due to my drinking and consequent moods and I know now that at this point my wife made her mind up once and for all that she wanted out. But she never said anything at the time.

Then came the second affair - this time much more "physical" (ie. not as emotionally deep) and to use her words "a tonic" to me. Again I read the signs and although I knew early on, I again found it difficult to prove.

Instead I started trying to lose weight, regain my fitness, cut back on drinking and generally try to improve myself. Unfortunately, I was competing against her new lover and feedback I received from her was either non-existent or more often totally negative.

I confirmed the affair by "bugging" our kitchen one Friday (about 4 weeks ago) and then confronting her with the evidence. Even then she initially tried to deny it. I spent that weekend in utter despair and I panicked. I threatened to tell his wife and if necessary my wife's work colleagues. I tried to plead with



her and poured on the emotion. In fact I basically did all the wrong things. My wife was extremely angry with me for ruining her fun, closing off her options and manipulating her.

This latter point highlights another key issue in our relationship; trust and control. She saw my whole "over-reaction" as an extension to one of her main issues with me – what she sees as my attempts to control her. There is complex history here too; she is by nature a very secretive and independent person (she says she is "private") who has never been a terribly good timekeeper. This inevitably lead to me regularly asking questions about her diary/timings/whereabouts etc. (for practical reasons ie. preparing meals, kids, family and social commitments, etc), which lead to her rebelling and becoming more independent, which in turn lead to increasing distrust and then, as she sees it, me trying to control her, etc. Without proper communication the cycle became almost impossible to break.

Anyway, the confrontation over the second affair was just over 4 weeks ago. On the Tuesday after the initial weekend of me trying to pressure her, she told me she had finished with him (although I know now she still sees him - "as a friend"). I believed her at the time as she was extremely upset and angry with me for "forcing" her into this action.

From that point, I have backed off, given her space, changed my entire routine to put her and the family first, stopped drinking completely (and feel so much better for it) and in general been working at trying to break the trust/control cycle (as above) whilst having to not expect any change in my wife's behavior. I have genuinely (my word - but I hope those around me would agree) become a better person, not only with the kids but with her as well. (Incidentally, she initially doubted the motives behind my changes and as little as about a week ago, talked a lot about the guilt she was now feeling that if we split it will be all her fault).

I should stress that I have no reason to believe that this is not a genuine and permanent change. Stopping the drinking has not only improved my well-being immeasurably but enabled me to put priorities in the right order, abandon worthless principles and values hammered into me during my upbringing (another story!) and see things differently.

I have also tried to slowly introduce some ideas from your books but without any joy. For example, I asked her recently if she felt she would like to **be able** to love me again - and she did say a sort of "yes" - so I introduced Covey's "love being an action" theory. She dismissed it with the words that there is no way she is able to "be all lovey-dovey with me" and "pretend/ behave as if she's in love with me", in order to try to let the love grow. So that's a non-starter. I suppose I have the question in my mind whether she is "not able" or just can't be bothered.

In summary, the current situation is:

She says she sees no future for us and she cannot waste any more of her life

She has made up her mind and "wants out"

She has given me one chance already and I blew it, wasting the last 5 years of her life

She feels nothing for me any more – either physically or emotionally

She says she is not frightened of being alone anymore and

She has recently made a real effort to improve her appearance, bought new and trendy clothes and arranged sessions of cosmetic surgery.

She has made it clear that the phase we are in at the moment is only a "trial period" but that that was my idea and she is going along with it but "never signed up to it".

She has put a time limit on this “trial period” of the end of March.

She cannot accept that the drinking is anything other than a “symptom” of our problems ie. she won't accept it is a contributing factor (I obviously see it as a major cause but she sees my view as simply trying to attach an excuse to my behavior over the years).

She is not prepared to completely sever all ties with the latest lover (she still SMSs him, sees him and speaks to him, “as a friend”)

We have even talked about trial separation but she is so far down the road to permanent separation in her mind that I believe she will grasp this as the first step to permanent separation (she says she cannot see that far ahead). I would be willing to try anything but at the moment I have doubts that the necessary ground rules in this scenario would ever be respected.

We are currently 4 sessions into a 12 session program with a relationship counselor but I have to say that the sessions so far have been very “negative”, hearing from my wife about all the bad in our marriage.(OK, I know this is inevitable as we wouldn't be there if it was all good.) Also this particular counselor specializes in divorce counseling and although it is early days, it feels as if it's going in the direction of helping me understand why we **will** separate rather than helping us to address my goal of “trying to keep us together”.

Re-reading this it all seems pretty bleak and negative. However, there are some (small) positives and I really want to work on those. I do feel however, that my wife, although maybe not consciously, is resisting these positives as strongly as she can. She certainly never acknowledges them or allows herself to react to them. The fact she can touch me, kiss me, hold my hand when we're out and even hug me occasionally, she says is nothing to do with her emotions or feelings for me, it is just a “comfort” thing after so many years together. I understand this and it does make sense, but this is tough for me as I do “feel” that there **is** something more there occasionally – but that she is fighting it back. She counters any mention of this by telling me I'm reading too much into it and trying to raise my hopes.

However, there are other glimmers of hope. Despite our obvious issues at the moment, we are in some ways getting on better than we ever have done (I'm happier, more helpful, have my priorities sorted, have abandoned ridiculous principles and values, I'm less moody, less self-centered, less depressed, less miserable, less insular, more pleasurable to be around, more consistent with the kids, not tired all the time, etc. etc). The companionship/teamwork in our relationship is definitely stronger than it has ever been, the commitment (from my side) is stronger than it has ever been but the love is extremely one-way traffic.

She often uses the words “yet” or “at the moment” when talking about her inability to show affection towards me. She has stressed that these are just words to describe the present and I should not base any hopes on things changing in the future but it does give me a glimmer of hope that she has a tiny bit of her mind still open. Am I clutching at straws?

The gifts I gave her for Valentine's Day I believe were appreciated and she gave me a real heartfelt “thank you”. She also showed some emotion but she is so reluctant to express or explain her emotions that I don't know the reason for, or the type of, the emotion. One comment she made later in the evening was “if only you'd done that in past years, we would have had a great marriage”.

You will probably have guessed by now that I am a very analytical and somewhat insecure person and

despite my recent positive changes to my lifestyle and priorities in life, that combination doesn't make me very hopeful about the future. It is also perhaps my worst enemy. Certainly, knowing how analytical I am, my wife has to be very careful with her words and I guess this, coupled with her tendency for keeping things to herself, doesn't help us have an open relationship.

It's taken me so long to wake up and I fear it is probably too late. I **have** really woken up this time and know I can be (am now?) what she's always wanted. But I think a) she is not prepared to give me another chance and b) has made her mind up and is planning her future alone. I wish I could turn the clock back but hey....

I really think that I've lost her, and with it my home, family life, our future together and everything we've worked towards for the last 15 years. It also probably goes without saying but despite everything, I still dearly love my wife. We have been through a lot together, we do have complex personalities and backgrounds and know each other better than anyone else knows either of us and it seems such a waste to face the rest of our lives apart. She cannot love me at the moment but is love alone the basis of a successful marriage? If we can build on the positives and what we do have, maybe in time the love will grow again.

I am not ready to accept that it's over yet but apart from just carrying on "being the new me", I feel at the moment that there is nothing more I can do. I would be comfortable with this arrangement if it weren't for what feels like immense pressure of the end of March time limit she has imposed on me.

Having her recent lover not fully removed from the scene is also a real issue for me but I know I cannot influence this in the circumstances. I keep telling myself that I cannot win my wife back by getting rid of him but I can get rid of him by winning her back...

I have not once mentioned "Mid Life Crisis". This is because although I really think that there is a significant element of her thinking that she's "not getting any younger" and "the grass is greener" outside of what we have (or more importantly, could have), I see MLC as purely a label for all the scenarios I have described above.

I'm not sure you can help. I'm not even sure if I'm asking for help - but your books are the closest I have got to anyone understanding the situation I'm in and I need a listening ear.

The biggest dilemma of all is that my best friend is my wife - and that's not really working well on the sympathetic ear front at the moment ;-)

I would appreciate any comments you may have,

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

You were right when you mentioned you have a real show-stopper of an issue here, and I want to start by thanking you for the obvious thought and self-analysis that went into your submission. One of the greatest benefits of writing down your problems is that you are able to put the whole thing together in your mind and define where you feel the issues are. It is also a good way of prioritizing where the main

issues are as well as the peripheral issues, and in this respect you have done a fine job.

You have a good grasp of where the problem is at, and your wife's inability to match your efforts is one of the most frustrating aspects of this case. I understand that as a couple you share involvement in the problem, and that your wife feels that your actions in some way influenced her to have her affairs. However, she has had two affairs and seems reluctant to take responsibility for this. This troubles me.

In order to find healing in your relationship you are going to need to revisit your relationship in the period surrounding the affairs, and search for your wife's motivations to seek fulfillment outside of the marriage. What were your wife's reasons at the time for reaching out to others? Does she still believe that those reasons are valid?

Her anger at being found out tells me more about the guilt she feels at being caught rather than feeling controlled by your control over her. She has a history of infidelity and needs to prove to you that she is indeed worthy of trust. Her actions, however, indicate clearly that she does not deserve the trust or freedom that she demands.

It's kind of like the chicken and the egg argument. She tells you that your control over her is what is driving her to feel unhappy and have affairs. It appears to me that it is more a case of her actions influencing the way you interact with her and "control" her.

In moving forward, there are a number of issues you need to look at as a couple. The first is in your wife playing the role of the victim. She isn't. She has had two affairs and needs to acknowledge her part in this. She may not be able to control what was happening in the marriage, but she can control her reaction to it. You have both contributed to the breakdown of the relationship in your own ways, and the sooner she is able to lose the blame mentality the sooner she can look forward. Being part of a partnership means you share the blame for what has happened. Acknowledge your part in creating this marriage crisis. Acknowledge her part too. Tell her that despite what has happened you value her as your wife.

A great marriage isn't about you making things up to her, and it's not about you giving her lavish or even heartfelt gifts. This is about defining what she believes a great marriage is. What is her definition of a great marriage? Is it lots of gifts? Is it promises of undying love? Or is it recognition of her worth in the relationship? What led her to seek fulfillment outside of the marriage, and what fulfillment did she receive?

I want you to take a look at Dr Gary Chapman's "The Five Love Languages." In it he explains the different ways each of us react to love, and the different ways we show love for one another. This might help you understand where your wife feels as though she is unloved, unvalued or unfulfilled.

She rejects the idea of love being an action. You need to challenge her on this point. How does she hope to recreate love in your marriage without making an effort to show love? She doesn't need to be in love with you, but she does need to show you a standard of respect, both as a person and as her husband.

Your wife also needs to cease all contact with her lover. This is totally unacceptable and is not negotiable. In order to move forward she needs to let go of the past. He cannot be a friend.



You need to try to make each interaction as positive as possible while still sticking up for yourself. If she becomes negative or starts playing the victim, walk away. You need to indicate to her that when she is being unreasonable, communication stops. Communication will only work when you are both working towards respecting each other and moving forward, not point-scoring and apportioning blame.

Even if she finds it hard to reciprocate, you should maintain your love using author Stephen Covey's theory about love being an action. Stephen Covey is the author of the widely regarded "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People." Find small ways to validate her role in the marriage, and her value to you as a person and lover. Tell her you appreciate the helpful things she does for you. Tell her that you love to see her smile. Tell her that even when you don't agree with her or sometimes don't even like her, you always love her.

Maintain the counseling and your positive attitude. If you need to beat your head and scream, make sure it isn't in front of her. Having frustration is normal. Finding ways to express it and let it go is what determines if it's a healthy feeling or not.



I am 30 years old and on the verge of a break down. I was recently exposed as an adulterer and since age of 06 i have been playing the roller coaster game with my wife. Through the time i lived at home and lived with friends. I ended my affair Feb of 06 and attempted to re-kindle my marriage with my wife. I had come to the realization too late that the woman i was married to was the one for me. From Feb. to July it seemed that life was almost back to normal and happiness all around. Around the end of July the other woman left a note regarding me seeing someone during my time away from my family. When confronted by this i lied and refused to confess. After a time i reluctantly told her it was true. From that point until now we have had good moments and bad. We started to see a counselor together and i did privately as well. It seemed as though we would be ok until the end of January when my wife told me she couldn't live this lie anymore. I have since moved out and currently moving into my own place alone. I constantly re-assure her that since the affair ended i have been honest but of course she does not believe me. I understand that the trust is not there and she agrees with that statement. She maintains there is no hope for us to reconcile because she no longer loves me the same way. I have been giving the space she needs but show her that i am there for her. I understand that once the trust can be rebuilt that our marriage can be saved but am unsure how to prove that i can be trusted again. To add more to my problem, my wife had just recently had our third child and when this had happened something inside me snapped. I became very mean and cold towards my wife and children.

I told my wife at one point i didn't think i loved her. I realize that the problems i blamed on her and my life was me and am currently and continually seeking counseling for this to ensure that i will conquer this problem. My wife agrees that she will go to counseling for herself but refuses to go with me. She does not believe that she will ever trust or be able to forgive me for what i have done. I am willing to do whatever i can to prove my self worth and love to her, and will truly give her freedom if trust cannot be re-kindled. I would appreciate any response on how i can rebuild trust after it has been smashed into a thousand pieces. I do this on my own because of the love i have for my wife and children. Please, I beg you help me.

MY REPLY:

Thanks for your email.

The issue I can see from your email is that despite your wishes to get back with your wife, your actions seem to be working against helping you achieve this wish.

Let's take a look at a few points:

- \* You had an affair and ended it in Feb 2006.
- \* July you confessed after lying about it when confronted.
- \* You moved out in January
- \* You became mean and cold towards your wife and children since the birth of your third child.
- \* You told her you didn't think you loved her

Looking at these points, how do you feel you are going to rebuild her trust and prove your self worth and love to her?

Despite how you may feel in your heart, your actions are of someone out of control. In fact, your actions have done far more damage than the affair ever did, and indicate clearly to your wife that you have little remorse or respect for her.

Your first course of action is to get your anger under control and to consider at all times how your actions are helping you achieve your goal. This is going to involve a level of self-awareness that you will not be used to. You need to take responsibility for your actions and how they have jeopardized your chances. Every one of the actions that I have listed above has given your wife a new reason to withdraw further and further away from you.

She no longer loves you the same way because of the person that you have become when you are around her. Your actions are volatile, dishonest, and rude. You may tell her one thing, but your actions tell her something completely different.

At the moment, your words mean very little to her. Let your actions show how much you love and support your family. Go to counseling and examine ways to process your anger in a positive way. Find ways to channel your stress and use it to motivate yourself to be a better person. Consider what it is like to be on the receiving end of your behavior.

If you are serious about saving your marriage, you have to show your wife that you are taking her seriously. Telling her you will change means nothing. Your actions will help rebuild her trust. Find ways to make every interaction as positive as possible. Show her that you respect her both as a friend and as the mother of your children.

This isn't going to be fixed overnight. You have done a lot of damage, and it is going to take a long time to regain her trust. Concentrate on being her friend first, before you push too hard to be her husband. Consider at each interaction if you are making progress or not.

There are a number of ways to channel stress and find ways to love your partner in our course. Take

the time to read it. Be patient. You can't undo the damage of the past instantly, no matter how much you want to. Let your future actions prove to her that you are worthy of her time and trust.



I am not sure where to start, but I am going to do my best. Any advice you may have is GREATLY appreciated.

My husband and I have been married 8 years. We have been together for 14 years (literally 1/2 my life). Three years ago we had our son. As with any other couple we have had our share of ups and downs but we have always been best friends and have been able to talk through things. Two weeks ago he came home and told me that he had an affair Easter weekend 2007. To say the least, I was heart broken!! I only asked "WHY" of which he could not answer. He said that it was a one night thing. He told me that he does not want to be married anymore---that he did not want to be a husband. He keeps saying that it is for the best. No other explanation is given. I have asked him if we could separate for awhile and he says that he does not want to work things out and that we are not getting back together. I feel like I am in high school again! He says that the only thing we need to discuss is who is taking what and when will he get to see our son. He even asked me to find out what needed to be done in order for us to divorce? I am refusing to make it that easy for him and have told him that he is the one that wants it, he is going to have to find out on his own. I thought about telling him it was required in this state to attend marriage counseling before the judge will sign off on a divorce--since he won't agree to go now, but I honestly don't think that is right. Right now I don't want my husband back---I want my BEST FRIEND back. In the last two weeks he has been gone, he has been doing a lot of "bar hopping" and drinking hanging out with guys I don't even know. I have had several people tell me that it is just a "STAGE" some men go through and that to just let him go through it--but at what expense? I have left him alone and not answered all his phone calls-of which makes him mad. Our son misses his daddy and frankly so do I! I am a very stubborn person as is he. I can't just walk away from something without being able to say that I have given it my all and I honestly can't say that. I have my faults also. I can say that I am willing to do whatever in my power to make this work. Right now I am trying to find an apartment for me and our son. I can't afford to stay here and I am not sure what I can depend on from him. Should I continue with moving out?

I have been under a lot of stress at work and he works long hours at night.

Since this separation, my doctor has ordered me to take one month off work.

I can't eat or sleep and am constantly crying. THIS IS NOT ME. Our lives have gotten to where we are like 2 ships passing in the sea. I really want to save my marriage. Is there any advice you can give me?

MY REPLY:

Sometimes the hardest thing about saving a marriage that has been affected by infidelity is facing up to the reality of what has happened. The first thing I want to point out is that his decision to want out of the marriage is not about you. This is not about him rejecting you or the marriage. Leaving is simply the easier of two options.

I want you to reframe the issue. Your husband has had an affair and has a lot of residual guilt surrounding what he did. From what I can see, it is easier for him to end the marriage than it is to face up to the reality of having an affair. By ending the marriage he escapes having to be accountable for his actions, both to you and those in the family that know about his affair. I want you to understand how difficult this is. By staying in the relationship, he is going to have to confront the reality of cheating on you every day of his married life. I understand that you are going through a really difficult time too, but it is important to understand, at least in some small part, his motivations for wanting out. By leaving the marriage he feels he can escape the guilt.

Unfortunately at this stage he doesn't have the clarity to realize that ending the marriage is going to compound the guilt, not minimize it.

I want you to start by answering his phone calls. Anything you can do to maintain or even increase the level of communication between you should be encouraged. As long as he is communicating with you, whether you feel it is good or bad, its a good thing. This isn't a stage that he is going through. Instead of finding meaning from why the affair occurred, you need to focus on ways to reintroduce communication into the relationship.

I want you to read "*Working on Yourself Doesn't Work*" by Ariel and Shya Kane. In their chapter about awareness they talk about being alive versus being right. Being stubborn is something I'm particularly good at too, but in being that way and always being right, we miss out on engaging in the relationship. After all, if we don't make mistakes we don't learn. What are you able to learn from this relationship situation? I'm not advocating that this is your fault, but there will be aspects of your relationship with your husband that will allow an opportunity for growth. Your challenge is to discover what areas you can make improvements in.

Your husband is motivated to end the relationship because he has the perception that it is just too difficult. Not answering his phone calls is further emphasizing the point that reconciliation is going to be difficult. If you want him to come back and work on the issues, you need to create an environment where it is possible for him to do so.

I want you to continue to shift out if it is unfeasible for you to remain in the family home. I want you to take time to understand your feelings and get some of them under control. Find ways to channel and express your stress and hurt. Find ways to let go of some of the feelings so you are able to approach your marriage issues with some clarity. Don't let your emotions cloud your judgment. It's fine to have emotions, but you can't allow yourself to be ruled by them.

Eating and sleeping is your first priority. Listen to your doctor. Find foods that you can eat without feeling too sick. Go for walks. Get fresh air. Reconnect with friends and support systems. There will be a number of friends who will be happy to help if you ask them.

Focus on making yourself better and stronger before you are ready to tackle your marriage. Eat, sleep, exercise, channel and manage stress. Spend time with friends and find things to laugh and smile about. Give yourself some clarity to this situation. If you are falling apart you will be unable to rescue your marriage.



Then it's time to start answering your phone. Talk to him. Encourage him to share his feelings with you. Tell him how you are committed to the marriage and to the family.

You can't control what he is doing, but you have direct control over yourself and your reactions to him. Are you going to let his actions defeat you? Are you going to let his actions make you into a bitter and angry person? No. Become the person that your husband first fell in love with. Become the person that is easy to come back to. Be the person that loves your partner unconditionally, no matter how angry or betrayed you feel. Remember, hate and love are very close on the emotional spectrum. You hate the way he acts because you very much still love him.

Have faith that while you have no control over his actions, you have control over your reactions to him, and that every reaction you have is motivated by love. That way the love that you show him will bring him back to you.



I have been married for 11 years but my wife and I have been together for 16 years. Our marriage was on rocky ground from the start. We came together because we had been dating for a couple of months and she got pregnant. I found out while I was overseas and she was back in the states. After I returned from overseas we agreed to become a family but we didn't get married until our son was 5. This is where the issues start, well actually they were there from the beginning. I had some destructive addictive behaviors that I know realize stemmed from unresolved issues from my childhood. I was a chronic adulterer and hurt my wife terribly many times over the course of our life together both before and after we were married. I never sought help for my destructive behavior and my wife's heart continued to be broken. At one point she turned to god and was told that in order for me to change she needed to leave me but she resisted that counsel and advice. Finally about 4 years ago after my last affair, she gave up emotionally. We continued to go through life together and on the surface everything appeared to be ok but we never sought counseling to deal with all of the damage and hurt. I stopped having affairs but was still doing other things that were just as damaging. Over the last 3 and a half years I slowly started to try to make up for the damage that I had done but I doubt it was having an impact. I think my wife's heart had died and she was just waiting for the opportunity to get out.

Last year I took a job that had me away for 3 months at a time and home for 1 month. I slowly started to notice a change in the tone of my wife's e-mail and finally in December she told me of an affair with a married man. She had slowly started easing into the single life with me being gone so much and because she had so much hurt built up and was looking to feel loved and worthwhile she was vulnerable. I immediately flew home to try and against the odds prevent any further damage. I had to go back to work however after 10 days and nothing was accomplished. I came home again after another two months due to the death of my mother. I had by that time decided to quit my job to try and focus on my severely damaged marriage and family. My wife in the meantime had continued contact with the OM who lived in another country and was also dating other men. She asked me to leave our home in April and I returned to the states leaving her overseas with our two children ages 16 and 10. She recently stopped contact with the married man because she got involved with someone from her

job. Which brings us to the current state. She is due to leave her overseas location to move to her next assignment after a two month leave in the states, she has stated that she knows this thing with the newest person can't go anywhere as they won't be able to see each other frequently because of geographical locations.

Although she has not said that she wants a divorce, she has repeatedly stated that she feels our options are limited as she cannot forget all of the painful memories from the past. Since returning to the states I have given my life to God (I actually did that when I found out about the affair), sought help to deal with the unresolved issues from my childhood and have turned my life around. I love my wife dearly and always have. I don't want a divorce and would like very much not to try and erase the past but to start anew. To try and at least build upon the life we have built together and start over. I guess I am trying to figure out where to go from here. How to open the door to dialogue for starting over and healing. I know that this seems like an impossible situation but I have to try as I love her with all my heart.

MY REPLY:

You are right when you say that you can't erase the past, and the scars of your past behaviors are significant. The success of your marriage is really going to hinge on a few things, including:

- \* You and your wife living near each other, preferably in the same country and same state. A long-distance relationship is not a marriage, nor is it an appropriate place from which to negotiate the future of your marriage.
- \* Your wife's ability to trust you again and find positive ways of channeling her pain. In order for you to regain her trust you need to demonstrate through actions, not words, that changes have been made.
- \* You going to a counselor to resolve your childhood issues that you have carried into adulthood. It's time to stop making excuses. You need to decide if you want to be present in the relationship. What do I mean by this? Be there for your wife. Nurture her, take care of her, appreciate her, share your feelings with her, share your dreams with her, be her lover and her friend.

Now expanding on those points, you identify that your behaviors are symptomatic of unresolved issues from your childhood. Have you sought treatment for those issues? Those that we resist, persist. Don't assume that your problems will go away on their own. Learn the lessons from your past, get counseling, modify your behaviors and stop making excuses. Your past may have affected you in a negative way, but one of the responsibilities of an adult and a father is that you are aware of your issues and seek treatment for them. Your childhood didn't cause you to have affairs. You did. That was a choice you made, and one that your wife and family will now have to live with.

The next point is that neither of you have been present in the relationship for a long time, both emotionally and physically. Your wife didn't have an affair because you did. She had an affair because she needed to feel the love and attention that you were unable to offer her. Your wife needed to be reminded of her femininity - her presence as a woman, and this is a very real need that needs to be fulfilled within the marriage if it's going to survive. She had given up on you emotionally, and in that moment, in her mind, you stopped being her husband. You had not been present in the marriage for even longer, at least as long as you were having affairs.

How do you recreate this presence? Communication. Talking about feelings. Finding moments of connection with your partner where you can demonstrate the love you have for one another. This is about an emotional as well as physical connection. Remember what it was like when you first met your wife?

What is your idea of the perfect relationship? What changes do you think need to be made in your relationship to get there? The biggest I can see is presence and communication.

